

DE GRUYTER

*Connie Scarborough*

# INSCRIBING THE ENVIRONMENT

ECOCRITICAL APPROACHES TO MEDIEVAL  
SPANISH LITERATURE



FUNDAMENTALS OF MEDIEVAL  
AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE

## Inscribing the Environment

# Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture

Edited by  
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

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Ecocritical Approaches to  
Medieval Spanish Literature

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## Note

Chapter One, “The Forest of Corpes: *Poema de Mio Cid*,” is mostly based on the article “Geographical and Allegorical Settings: An Ecocritical Reading of ‘Afrenta de Corpes’ in the *Poema de Mio Cid*,” *Mediaevistik* 24 (2012): 111–23.

Significant parts of Chapter Seven already appeared in the article “Sexual Imagery as Unifying Factor in *Razón de amor y los desnudos del agua y el vino*,” *Hispanic Research Journal* 12.3 (2011): 207–20.

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## Introduction

### Ecocritical Sensibilities and Spanish Medieval Texts

Applications of the tenets of ecocriticism to medieval literature are relatively recent phenomena. While medieval authors cannot be considered environmentalists with the same connotations that the term conveys today, they were keenly aware, often simply by default or necessity, of their natural surroundings. They marveled at the natural world as evidence of God's power while, at the same time, they realized their vulnerability in the face of its vagaries.<sup>1</sup> Texts from medieval Spain are not unique in representing authors' responses to, and depictions of, the natural environment but an ecocritically-informed reading of them has not yet been systematically undertaken. By concentrating on canonical works that have been examined from a variety of other critical viewpoints, this study hopes to add another level of awareness to the natural phenomena included in them.

Gillian Rudd's 2007 book, *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature*, is an excellent example of how fruitful an ecocritical approach can be when applied to medieval texts. Rudd examines different elements of the natural world such as trees, wilderness, gardens, fields, and the sea, and analyzes how different authors portray the natural environments around them. While not dismissing symbolic or allegorical readings for the natural world in medieval texts, Rudd exhorts us to read beyond the figurative meanings and see the actual elements that are "over-written by the allegory."<sup>2</sup> This critic asks us to look at the

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<sup>1</sup> In their collection of essays Ridyard and Benson speak of the medieval concept of nature as, at the same time, a fascinating revelation of the bounty of God's creation and also a reminder of human struggles in a sometimes hostile world as a result of the fall from Paradise. Susan J. Ridyard and Robert G. Benson, ed. *Man and Nature in the Middle Ages*. Sewanee Medieval Studies, vol. 6 (Sewanee, TN: University of the South Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gillian Rudd, *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature*. Manchester Manchester Medieval Literature (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 11.

details of descriptions of the natural world as part of medieval authors' reality as they perceived and transmitted it. She asserts that "The challenge must be to read with an awareness of allegory, while also focusing on the actual animals, plants, rocks or seas under debate. For literary critics it is not a case of either/or but of both-and."<sup>3</sup> I specifically cite Rudd here since she deals exclusively with medieval literature, but this book would not be possible without the development of ecocriticism as a field of literary inquiry beginning in the 1990s.

Fundamental texts such as Glotfelty and Fromm's *The Ecocritical Reader*, Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*, and Kroeber's *Ecological Literary Criticism* set in motion a broad application of the tenets of ecocriticism to national literatures from any period.<sup>4</sup> For example, the recently-published volume, *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*,<sup>5</sup> includes articles that examine the natural world in some Spanish texts, especially the *Poema de Mio Cid* and the *Libro de la caza*. This book expands on these valuable contributions and systematically draws attention to a reading of the natural elements in Spanish medieval texts without losing sight of the symbolic potential(s) of which their original audiences would have been aware.<sup>6</sup>

A variety of definitions and explanations of ecocriticism and green reading have been proposed. Rebecca Douglass defines ecocriticism as "reading with attention to treatments of nature, land, and place, informed by a desire to understand past and present connections between literature and human attitudes regarding the earth."<sup>7</sup> Rudd notes that ecocriticism is an effort to move beyond anthropocentrism in which only things of human utility are valued.<sup>8</sup> Richard Kerridge stresses that the aim of ecocriticism is to see the interdependence between literature and nature since both are part of human existence.<sup>9</sup> Glen Love develops this idea in his book *Practical Ecocriticism* when he asserts that "the enveloping natural world is part of

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<sup>3</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Lawrend Buell, *The Enviromental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Karl Kroeber, *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Albrecht Classen, in collaboration with Christopher R. Clason. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 9 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> There are many studies on the symbolic associations with elements in the natural world. A recently-published example is Werner Telesko, *The Wisdom of Nature: The Healing Powers and Symbolism of Plants and Animals in the Middle Ages*, trans. Stephen Telfer (Munich, London, and New York: Prestel Verlag, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Douglass, "Ecocriticism and Middle English Literature," *Studies in Medievalism* 10 (1998): 136-63; here 138.

<sup>8</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Kerridge, "Introduction," *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammels (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998), 7.

the subject of the printed page before us [and] even when it is not, it remains as a given, a part of the interpretive context."<sup>10</sup> And Cheryll Glotfelty simply states that "ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies."<sup>11</sup> She also stresses the idea of interdependence "between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance it [ecocriticism] has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman."<sup>12</sup>

Scholars of medieval literature and art have successfully used the tenets of ecocriticism to give us a more nuanced view of how medieval authors and artists interpreted and portrayed the natural world around them. Even before the term "ecocriticism" became popular, pioneer critics such as Pearsall and Salter were investigating what they term "the development of landscape realism" in medieval art and literature.<sup>13</sup> More recently, critics have focused on a singular natural phenomenon such as forests,<sup>14</sup> the sea,<sup>15</sup> gardens,<sup>16</sup> or mountains<sup>17</sup> as these are portrayed in literary texts. These studies use disparate approaches but all focus our attention on these features of landscape as keys to our understanding of how

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<sup>10</sup> Glen A. Love, *Practical Ecocriticism* (Charlottesville, VA: Univeristy of Virginia Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, (see note 4), xv–xxxvii; here xviii.

<sup>12</sup> Glotfelty, "Introduction" (see note 11), xix.

<sup>13</sup> Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (London: Elck Books, Ltd., 1973), 161.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Robert P. Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Della Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: Literature, Lore, and Landscape* (Woodbridge, England and Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2010); Oliver Rackham, *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* (London: Dent, 1976); Corinne Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1993); Jean Birrell, "Common Rights in the Medieval Forest: Disputes and Conflicts in the Thirteenth Century," *Past and Present* 117.1 (1987): 22–49; Jeffrey S. Theis, *Writing the Forest in Early Modern English: A Sylvan Pastoral Nation* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2009), and Teresa Kwiatkowska, "The Sadness of the Woods is Bright: Deforestation and Conservation in the Middle Ages," *Medievalia* 39 (2007): 40–47.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Susan Rose, *The Medieval Sea* (London and New York: Hambledon-Continuum, 2007) and Jonathan Raban, ed., *The Oxford Book of the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> For example, Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Albrecht Classen, "The Mountain in Medieval German Literature Terra Incognita, Terrifying Geographical Location, or Overlooked but Important Entities in Medieval Mentality," *Heights of Reflection: Mountains in the German Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 35–56; id., "The Discovery of the Mountain as an Epistemological Challenge: A Paradigm Shift in the Approach to Highly Elevated Nature. Petrarch's *Ascent to Mont Ventoux* and Emperor Maximilian's *Theuerdank*," *The Book of Nature and Humanity: Natural and Human Worlds in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hawkes. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

medieval authors perceived the natural world around them. The growing body of ecocritical work by scholars in the fields of medieval and early modern literary analysis has been particularly useful and gives a larger context for my own reading of the natural world as it appears in canonical works of medieval Spanish literature.

Specific studies dealing with other literatures have served as theoretical models for this study and highlight the need for more studies on Spanish medieval literature.<sup>18</sup> Especially useful examples include Christopher Clason's study of the early thirteenth-century German poet, Walther von der Vogelweide from an ecocritical perspective. Clason shows that Walther's courtly love poems certainly embody many of the standard topoi of medieval literature but asserts that the poet also engages with natural elements in a personal way, suggesting a familiarity with the natural world and a desire to portray it realistically.<sup>19</sup> Ecocritical approaches to courtly romance have shown how the hero most often must expose himself to the natural world and all its inherent dangers to grow to maturity. Penny Simons, for example, studies the intermediate spaces in the Old French *Guillaume de Palerne*, i.e., those between the world of the court and wilderness of the forest, such as orchards and parks. She concludes that the most important events of the romance actually occur in these intermediary natural settings and are essential for driving the plot.<sup>20</sup>

The forest wilderness has also been studied by Rosa A. Perez as a key factor in Adent le Roi's *Li Romans de Berte aus Grans pies* (1273). When queen Berte is unjustly expelled she must survive in a hostile wilderness environment where she encounters dangers from human and animal attackers. In order to remain safe, Berte finds work near the edge of the forest and, in the end, this forest is transformed into a kind of *locus amoenus* when she is finally reunited with her husband who finds her in her exile.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See especially Rudd's text (see note 2). Also Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011); Bernard F. Huppé, "Nature in *Beowulf* and *Roland*," *Approaches to Nature in the Middle Ages: Papers of the Tenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lawrence D. Roberts, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies*, 16 (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 3–41; F. W. Moorman, *The Interpretation of Nature in English Poetry from Beowulf to Shakespeare*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte der germanischen Völker, 95 (1905; New York: AMS Press, 1972).

<sup>19</sup> Christopher R. Clason, "'Gebrochen bluomen unde gras': Medieval Ecological Consciousness in Selected Poems by Walther von der Vogelweide," *Rural Space* (see note 5), 227–50.

<sup>20</sup> Penny Simons, "The Significance of Rural Space in *Guillaume de Palerne*," *Rural Space* (see note 5), 407–31.

<sup>21</sup> Rosa A. Perez, "The Forest as Locus of Transition and Transformation in the Epic Romance *Berte aus grans pies*," *Rural Space* (see note 5), 433–50.

The careful management of rural space, a topic I want to explore at length, has also drawn the attention of other scholars. The most-oft studied example of the management, or taming, of nature is the garden or park. Albrecht Classen has pointed out the parallel between an increased interest in medieval literature's attention to secular love and an artistic interest in portraying "enclosures, both in the form of gardens, often paralleling paradise, and parks, serving for hunting purposes."<sup>22</sup> He also cites a clear demarcation in the Late Middle Ages between the untamed and often hostile forest and the garden or park which are seen as completely under control and, thus, pleasant and safe "natural" settings.<sup>23</sup> In more specific terms, Abigail P. Dowling has studied the park at Hesdin, enclosed by order of Robert II, Count of Artois (1250–1302). Through an examination of the detailed account books kept by Robert and his daughter, Dowling finds that this rural space was carefully managed so as to yield food items and forest products for this family. In fact, the family's careful control over the park gives valuable evidence to the fact that aristocrats were fully aware of the bounty that the natural world could provide for them.<sup>24</sup>

Royal gardens and parks are also the subject of an article by Marilyn L. Sandidge. She traces the history of these natural areas in England under the king's control in the Middle Ages, especially with regard to hunting and zoo keeping.<sup>25</sup> The present book intends to build on this growing body of ecocritical approaches to medieval texts. I hope to add what Borlik has called "surprising insights and perspectives" to ecocriticism that, despite the important examples I have noted, has concentrated heretofore almost exclusively on nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry and writings about Nature.<sup>26</sup> In my analyses of Spanish works, I particularly take into account the influence of Christian theology and its beliefs about the natural world. Clarence Glacken has identified the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a period when nature began to be studied in terms of natural law. He speaks about theology's preoccupation with creation and examining the natural world by means of exegetical studies of Biblical texts.<sup>27</sup> Bryan Moore concurs with Glacken and stresses that studying nature, especially among thirteenth-century scholastics, was one way to understand the workings of God in the world.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Classen, *Rural Space* (see note 5), 30.

<sup>23</sup> Classen, *Rural Space* (see note 5), 159.

<sup>24</sup> Abigail P. Dowling, "Landscape of Luxuries: Mahaut d'Artois's (1302–1329) Management and Use of the Park at Hesdin," *Rural Space* (see note 5), 367–87.

<sup>25</sup> Marilyn L. Sandidge, "Hunting or Gardening: Parks and Royal Rural Space," *Rural Space* (see note 5), 389–406.

<sup>26</sup> Borlik, *Ecocriticism* (see note 18), 206.

<sup>27</sup> Clarence J. Glacken, *Trees on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 245.

<sup>28</sup> Bryan L. Moore, *Ecology and Literature: Ecocentric Personification from Antiquity to the Twenty-First*

As we shall see, the writers of our texts were concerned with observing nature while, at the same time, they were keenly aware of the potential for allegorical, symbolic, and exegetical interpretation in literary depictions of natural phenomena. In describing the natural world around them, they were not merely using nature as a backdrop; they were reproducing and reflecting nature through literary lenses. An ecocritical approach requires us to focus on the natural phenomena presented in these texts in such a way that we can move beyond their utility for plot or character development and see their intrinsic value both for the authors and the audiences of the works. To these ends, I have divided this book into three sections: "Nature Untamed," as represented by wilderness areas (forests, deserts, mountains, seas); "Nature Tamed," featuring spaces appropriated for human needs (gardens and fields); and, lastly, "Nature Stylized," where the description of nature follows a prescribed literary motif or rhetorical exercise (variations on the *locus amoenus* and the *laus Hispaniae*).

The first chapter of this study examines the roles that specific geographical and natural features play in the *Poema de Mio Cid* (ca 1207). I focus on the *Afrenta de Corpes* section of the poem for a study of the wild forest, both as physical reality and as idea. The concept of the forest as untamed space beyond human control and as a place where criminal acts occur was exploited by the Cid poet in this section of the *Poema de Mio Cid*. Also, the forest is contrasted with urban environs such as the city or the court where the environment is firmly under human control. The Infantes de Carrión carry out their plot to beat their wives and leave them for dead in the oak grove of Corpes, in a wilderness beyond the control of their father or the king. When the Cid seeks redress for the Infantes de Carrión's attack on his daughters, he not only acts to restore the honor of his family but also to re-establish the control he had lost when the Infantes left his court and entered the wilderness.

The second chapter focuses on deserts and mountains as sites of spiritual purification. In the *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* (first half thirteenth century), the desert is essential in the transformation of Mary of Egypt from wanton sinner to exemplary saint. This poem tells the story of an infamous prostitute who repents her sinful life and spends forty-seven years in the desert. In this harsh environment Mary's physical beauty is destroyed in order for her inner beauty to shine forth. The desert is a protagonist-agent cooperating with God in the enterprise to save a grievous sinner and recast her as a saint, subsisting almost entirely without food or any creature comfort in an extreme environment. In two hagiographic works by Gonzalo de Berceo, the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos* (1236), and the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla* (ca 1230), the desert and mountain

wilderness are respectively significant. In the *Vida de Santo Domingo*, Dominic spends a year and a half in the desert living in hardship and constant prayer before becoming a monk at the monastery of San Millán. His time in the desert is not an act of repentance, since he is presented as pious even as a child, but forms part of his preparation to enter the cloistered life. The harsh conditions of the desert help prepare him to be a model for monastic living. In the *Vida de San Millán*, Millán spends some forty years in the mountains, fleeing from contact with others in order to better commune with God. He lives the life of a nomadic hermit in the mountains of northern Spain, enduring incredible hardships and living as a saintly example of self-sacrifice.

Chapter Three examines descriptions of the sea in two thirteenth-century works, the *Libro de Alexandre* (first half of the thirteenth century) and Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (1257–1283). In the *Libro de Alexandre*, the sea figures prominently in three descriptions of the *mappa mundi* and in the section on the hero's underwater adventure. The oceans define and separate the land masses, or continents, in the *mappa mundi* and they also represent the realm of the unknown and the potentially dangerous. When Alexander invades the depths of the sea in his glass submarine, he angers the allegorical figure of Nature. The hero oversteps the boundaries established for human knowledge and control when he probes below the surface of the seas and sets in motion his own demise. In the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* the sea most commonly appears as a violent force of nature, and the protagonists are often caught in stormy waters. The narratives emphasize Mary's ability to calm the sea when her devotees call on her for help. The poets of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the *Libro de Alexandre* draw on literary models for their portrayal of the oceans but they also embellish their depictions of the sea with vivid and realistic details. The sea is presented as the largest realm on earth and it defies any human effort to control it or understand its secrets.

In the second section of the book, I study natural settings that were tamed for practical purposes such as farming, or natural spaces set aside for specific functions such as recreation or combat. I first focus on the urban garden as exemplified by the garden of Melibea's home in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (1502). In this text, the urban garden is depicted as a common feature of urban architecture and, as the secret meeting place for the two lovers, it is a site associated with illicit sexual desire. The characters' vivid descriptions of the garden celebrate its natural features within a space they appropriate for their own enjoyment. But the garden of Melibea's house is also part of the patrimony of her father as is Melibea herself. The invasion of the garden by Calisto represents an invasion of Melibea's body and of the social fabric of urban, aristocratic society. In the *Tragicomedia*, the garden is transformed from a place of delight to one of tragedy for the lovers.

The next chapter treats fields in a number of works composed (or copied in the case of the *Poema de Mio Cid*) in the thirteenth century. Fields in these works are defined as natural areas harnessed for people's use and designated for specific purposes—agricultural or livestock production, recreation, or combat. My first examples of fields are found in two collections of Marian miracle narratives—Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (mid-thirteenth century). Although miracle stories, by definition, are designed to depict the power of the Virgin, or other divine figures, to intervene in the lives of the faithful, their descriptions of fields hold important clues as to how medieval audiences perceived the division and exploitation of the land. In the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* we find both poetic and iconographic portrayals of fields, giving us the opportunity to explore the pictorial representation of fields alongside the accompanying poetic texts. Various types of fields appear in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*—vineyards, plowed fields, gaming fields, and battle fields—as sites where Mary actively intervenes in the lives of her devotees. Berceo's *Milagro XI*, "The Greedy Farmer," is concerned with respecting legal boundaries for fields and the consequences of usurping another's property. Exploitation of fields belonging to others is considered a mortal sin and only the Virgin can intervene to save the soul of a farmer who had profited from working another person's land.

The *Poema de Mio Cid* describes a carefully delimited field proscribed for judicial combat in the third *cantar*. The field where the champions of the Cid and the Infantes de Carrión carry out judicial duels is presented as part of a realistic legal system and also as a symbolic space where the Cid's honor is restored. It is a precisely measured area and the actions that occur within its bounds have far-reaching implications for the poem's hero and his family.<sup>29</sup> A field for judicial combat is also found in the *Libro de Alexandre* in the section on the Trojan War. The poem includes a description of the specific valley designated as the site for the duel ordered by Hector between Menelaus and Paris. It adapts the description of this field from the classic tale, as well as that of the battle grounds where the Greek

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<sup>29</sup> Specific studies dealing with judicial combat in the *Poema de Mio Cid* include Ian Michael, "Tres duelos en el *Poema de Mio Cid*," *El comentario de textos*, 4: *La poesía medieval* (Madrid: Castalia, 1983): 85–104; John K. Walsh, "Epic Flaw and Final Combat in the *Poema de Mio Cid*," *La corónica* 5.2 (1977): 100–09; Roger M. Walker, "The Infantes de Carrión and the Final Duels in the *Poema de mio Cid*," *La corónica* 6.1 (1977): 22–25; Jules Horrent, *Historia y poesía en torno al Cantar del Cid* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1973); Milija N. Pavlović and Roger Walker, "A Reappraisal of the Closing Scenes of the *Poema de mio Cid*," *Medium Aevum* 58 (1989): 1–16 and 189–205; Michael Harney, *Kinship and Polity in the Poema de Mio Cid*. Purdue Studies in Romance Languages, West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993; and, Joseph J. Duggan, *The Cantar de mio Cid: Poetic Creation and its Economic and Social Contexts*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 5 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

and Trojan armies meet, to depict these natural areas in terms with which a medieval audience would have been familiar.<sup>30</sup>

The third section of the book is devoted to stylized descriptions of nature as found in the literary motifs and rhetorical exercises represented by the *locus amoenus* and the *laus Hispaniae*. Even though the examples in this section follow well-established patterns, I read them with an eye to nuances of description and the function they fulfill within the literary work as a whole. Chapter six treats the *locus amoenus* as it is adopted and adapted for purposes of religious allegory by Gonzalo de Berceo in the prologue to the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*. Berceo lifts the *locus amoenus* from the literary tradition of *fin amors* and uses it as an extended metaphor for the Virgin Mary and the miracles she works in the lives of Her devotees. I address the problems inherent in a description of nature that relies almost exclusively on Biblical exegesis for its allegorical interpretation. I will argue that Berceo's description of the luscious green meadow and its association with the work's pilgrim/narrator can also be read as non-allegorical, i.e., as the cleric poet's celebration of nature as revelatory of the divine power behind the wonders of creation.

Chapter seven presents the pleasant natural environment of a forest glen as a *locus amoenus* for two lovers. The poet of *Razón de amor con los denuestos del agua y el vino* (first half 13<sup>th</sup> century) relies on both associative meanings and realistic depiction of the natural elements in the forest clearing to celebrate the joys of carnal pleasure. He also sets the allegorical debate between water and wine in the same restful glen where the lovers meet. In the debate, wine, the elixir of love, triumphs over the objections of water and bolsters the poem's defense of the delights of the flesh.

The eighth chapter engages with another literary *topos*, the *laus Hispaniae*, as it appears in the *Poema de Fernán González* (ca 1250) and Alfonso X's *Estoria de España* (also known as the *Primera Crónica General* (1270–1284). The praise of place was

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<sup>30</sup> General studies on combat to determine a judicial dispute include George Ives, *A History of Penal Methods: Criminals, Witches, Lunatics*, Patterson Smith Reprint Series in Criminology, Law Enforcement, and Social Problems, 124 (1914; Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1970); John Briggs, Christopher Harrison, Angus McInnes and David Vincent, *Crime and Punishment in England: An Introductory History* (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1996); Esther Cohen, *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History Vol. 36 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1993); Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Scott L. Taylor, "Judicium Dei, vulgaris popularisque sensus: Survival of Customary Justice and Resistance to its Displacement by the 'New' *Ordines iudiciorum* as Evidenced by Francophonic Literature of the High Middle Ages," *Crime and Punishment in Middle Ages and Early Modern Time*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Connie L. Scarborough. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 11 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 109–29.

part of classical rhetorical encomia. The *laus Hispanie* extolled the country's landscapes and abundant natural resources and was a common motif in both Latin chronicles and vernacular literary and historical texts. In these two versions of the *laus Hispaniae*, I point out differences in the details included in each of the respective texts and show that, in fact, the standardized elements in these encomia reflect both natural reality as well as political and propagandistic agendas. These descriptions of the geographical features of Spain stress the need to defend the land and resources against hostile, outside forces and promote a spirit of unity based on a common identity. By analyzing the specific, natural features included in the *laus* we gain a better idea of how these authors viewed their own surroundings and those features they deemed as essential for the emerging idea of Spanishness.

In my readings of these texts I try to follow the principle that to read ecocritically is to read details about natural elements and give them credit for doing something more than just adding to an effect of verisimilitude.<sup>31</sup> The natural phenomena, settings, and landscapes function on many levels beyond providing background against which the actions and emotions of the characters play out. If we read, carefully, the details of the natural phenomena we find clues as to the authors' understanding of the natural world as well as how they translated those experiences into literary and historical texts. Even when utilized as part of a stylized literary motif, such as the *locus amoenus* or *laus Hispaniae*, the descriptions of the natural environment can be read on more than a symbolic level. Symbolic or allegorical interpretations are certainly valid in the reading of medieval texts but to read them solely in that manner is to deny esthetic, as well as ecological, awareness in the authors' depictions of the natural world. Looking at the environmental details in these texts also helps us preclude an entirely anthropocentric reading of them. Nature speaks in these works in literal, symbolic, allegorical, and spiritual ways. The authors' experiences with the natural world and attitudes toward the earth inform their literary productions. As negotiators between the natural world and the cultural artifact of the literary work, these authors' depictions of their surroundings hold valuable clues as to how medieval artists perceived, interpreted, and inscribed their natural environments for their readers.

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<sup>31</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 11. See also other important applications of ecocriticism to medieval and early modern texts, including: Alfred Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009); Ridyard and Benson, *Man and Nature in the Middle Ages* (see note 1); Borlik, *Ecocriticism* (see note 18); and John Howe and Michael Wolfe, ed., *Inventing Medieval Landscape: Senses of Place in Western Europe* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009).

## Part I – Nature Untamed

### Chapter One – The Forest of Corpes: *Poema de Mio Cid*

Simone Pinet states that “Los espacios del *Poema de Mio Cid* no pueden separarse quirúrgicamente entre espacios geográficos y literarios, entre itinerarios y *topoi*” (The spaces in the *Poema de Mio Cid* cannot be surgically divided into geographic and literary, or into itineraries and *topoi*).<sup>32</sup> I agree that we cannot separate descriptions of the natural settings in the *Poema de Mio Cid*<sup>33</sup> from its essential structure as a heroic epic. However, I would like to suggest a reading of the third *cantar* of the *Poema de Mio Cid*, the *Afrenta de Corpes*, that considers the poet’s description of natural environs as both an expression of his experience with nature and as a literary device. While not ignoring the symbolic potential in descriptions of nature, I want to focus on how the natural world is intimately present in the episodes of the *Afrenta de Corpes*. For this analysis I borrow ideas from ecocritics while keeping in mind the established structure for the heroic epic and the expectations of its original audience.

When we study descriptions of natural settings in the poem, we cannot remove these from the interpretive context of literature, as Glen Love has observed.<sup>34</sup> The natural environs depicted in the *Afrenta de Corpes* are associated with literary themes such as journey, wilderness, isolation, and community. All of these are keys to a reading of the *Afrenta de Corpes* in which historical and legendary geography are incorporated within an essentially dramatic structure.<sup>35</sup> Of singular prominence, as we shall see, is the forest itself, the *Robledo de Corpes*, (Oak Grove of Corpes) where the shaming of the Cid’s daughters takes place. The forest is a

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<sup>32</sup> Simone Pinet, “Para leer el espacio en el *Poema de Mio Cid*: *brevario teórico*,” *La corónica* 33.2 (2005): 195–208; here 206.

<sup>33</sup> Hereafter *PMC*.

<sup>34</sup> See Love, *Practical Ecocriticism* (see note 10), especially p. 16. Specifically referring to the *PMC*, Pinet agrees with Love and calls the natural settings especially productive for a study of poetics. “Para leer” (see note 32), 201.

<sup>35</sup> Pinet, “Para leer” (see note 32) 207.

defined geographical space isolated from the rest of society where the Infantes de Carrión act with seeming impunity.

Montaner reminds us that before the idea of the picturesque that developed in the late eighteenth century, the perception of natural settings was dominated by the identification of similarities or, in other words, the grouping of places within predetermined categories. Natural settings were grouped into three basic types: 1) inhospitable settings outside of societal control; 2) cultivated zones where equilibrium between nature and human society exists; and, 3) the city where nature is totally prescribed and controlled.<sup>36</sup> I believe that Montaner's categories, especially the first (inhospitable settings), is especially useful for this study of the depiction of the forest, or oak grove, in the third *cantar*.

The third section of the *PMC* (the *Afrenta de Corpes*) has attracted the attention of many scholars. It has been studied in relationship to the rhetorical topos of the *locus amoenus*, martyrological traditions, the Roman Lupercalia ritual, local folklore and the *alba* (dawn songs of lovers who must part).<sup>37</sup> Critics, such as Curtius and Montaner, have hinted at an ecocritical evaluation of the third *cantar* but neither one of them has systematically studied the interdependence between the natural and literary worlds as revealed in this section of the *PMC*. Curtius studies the *cantar* in terms of epic landscape. He states that "The medieval epic is always ready to impart topographical and geographical information," and in many cases a turning point, or climax, is associated with a specific scenic description.<sup>38</sup> This is true, of course, for the decisive incident—the shaming of the Cid's daughters—which occurs in the oak grove of Corpes, but Curtius sees the description of the forest as a device in epic plot development without reference to any nuance or intrinsic value in and of itself. Montaner classifies the forest where the women are abused as a *locus terribilis*—"el ámbito propicio para la aventura, para lo inesperado, lo violento e incluso lo sobrenatural" (the appropriate environment for adventure, for the unexpected, the violent and even the supernatural).<sup>39</sup> He sees the forest as antithesis of the *locus amoenus*, also present in the third *cantar*, in the description of the campsite where the Infantes make love to their wives the night before they attack them. This contrast is accurate but it does not consider the forest described in the third *cantar* in terms of the author's experience of the forest

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<sup>36</sup> Alberto Montaner, ed., *Cantar de Mio Cid*. Biblioteca Clásica (Barcelona: Centro para la Edición de Clásicos Españoles, Galaxia Gutenberg, Círculo de Lectores, 2007), ccxvii. All quotes from the *PMC* are from this edition and page number references are included in the text.

<sup>37</sup> Alan Deyermond and David Hook, "The *Afrenta de Corpes* and Other Stories," *La corónica* 10.1 (1981): 12–37; here 12.

<sup>38</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Willard R. Trask (1948; New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks-Harper and Row, 1963), 201.

<sup>39</sup> Montaner, *Cantar* (see note 36), ccxviii.

and how that knowledge informed his presentation of the oak grove. Montaner sees the forest solely in terms of a rhetorical device.

Throughout the *PMC*, Menéndez Pidal argues for the exactitude of the geography presented in the poem: “todos los lugares que menciona, aun los más insignificantes, llegan a identificarse en la toponimia moderna o en la antigua” (all the places mentioned, even the most insignificant, can be identified in either modern or ancient toponymy).<sup>40</sup> He focuses on the route that the Infantes de Carrión take, with the Cid’s daughters, after their failed attempt to assassinate the Moor, Avengalvón, who had given them hospitality.<sup>41</sup> While this analysis is useful, Menéndez Pidal does not focus on the way the poem describes natural settings aside from providing clues for identifying specific locales. Although Haywood is not necessarily concerned with proving or disproving the geographic accuracy of the *PMC*, she also studies the route that Elvira and Sol take with their husbands and points out that it is opposite to the one they had traveled with their mother in the company of Minaya Álvar Fáñez to join the Cid, “playing out in reverse aspects of their triumphal journey to Valencia.”<sup>42</sup> She also sees the journey toward Corpes as movement toward evil since the attack on the women will also constitute an attack on the Cid’s integrity.<sup>43</sup> This is an entirely accurate assessment of the routes taken by the Cid’s daughters, first to join their father in Valencia and later to abandon that city in the company of their husbands, but it does not focus on the natural world they encounter on these journeys.<sup>44</sup>

My interest in the natural settings described in this part of the *PMC* is neither to prove the historical accuracy (or inaccuracy) of events or to emphasize the metaphorical value of the journey motif. Rather, I wish to show how the poet incorporated his knowledge of the terrain and natural settings—knowledge probably shared by many members of his audience—into the poem as part of his

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<sup>40</sup> Ramón Menéndez Pidal, ed. *Poema de Mio Cid*. Clásicos Castellanos (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1996), 73.

<sup>41</sup> Smith and Walker link the Infantes’ plot to kill Avengalvón with the beating and abandonment of Elvira and Sol: “If they are capable of cold-blooded murder of someone who has not only done them no harm, but who, on the contrary, has treated them with honour and spectacular generosity, what can they be plotting as a suitable revenge against the Cid who, they believe, has seriously damaged their honour?” Colin Smith and Roger M. Walker, “Did the Infantes de Carrión Intend to Kill the Cid’s Daughters?” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 56.1 (1979): 1–10; here 6.

<sup>42</sup> Louise M. Haywood, “Symbolic Space and Landscape in the *Poema de Mio Cid*,” *Mio Cid Studies: “Some Problems of Diplomatic” Fifty Years On*, ed. Alan D. Deyermond, et.al. Papers of the Medieval and Hispanic Research Seminar 42 (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary University of London, 2002), 105–27; here 118.

<sup>43</sup> Haywood, “Symbolic Space” (see note 42), 123.

<sup>44</sup> Classen observes that the poet “endeavored most intriguingly to give us a good sense of the journey through the wooded mountains, almost in a cinematographic fashion.” “Introduction,” *Rural Space* (see note 5), 36.

perspective on the natural world around him. The poet, in part, relies on the audience's familiarity with these natural environs to transfer these settings into the literary world of the epic hero and his family.

The poet begins his description of the journey toward the oak grove of Corpes by stating that the Infantes leave Ansarera, avoiding Atienza which is described as a "peña muy fuert" (very craggy peak) (v. 2691).<sup>45</sup> This description of the craggy peaks of Atienza makes it clear that the Infantes choose to avoid the most difficult terrain as they rush to put distance between their retinue and Valencia. They leave the space where the Cid can protect his daughters, through wilderness areas to the forest where they plan to exact their revenge on the women.<sup>46</sup> The Infantes' retinue then passes through the Sierra de Miedes. The Sierra here is that of Pela which forms a natural protective barrier for Miedes.<sup>47</sup> The inclusion of these geographic landmarks signals to the poet's audience that the Infantes are using natural barriers to escape as quickly and safely as possible to a place sufficiently isolated where they will carry out their plan of attack. Also, on the level of character development, the details of the Infantes' route reinforce the idea that this journey is premeditated as is their plan for revenge. The poem next mentions Montes Claros, a place name which cannot be as precisely identified as those heretofore named. Some critics see the identification of these mountains as a geographic error in the *PMC*, but the accuracy of the route, I think, is less important than the evocation of natural space—here one of mountainous terrain implying increasing isolation and wilderness.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ian Michael identifies Atienza as lying 35kms west by northwest of Medinaceli, "in difficult country." Ian Michael, "Geographical Problems in the 'Poema de Mio Cid': II The Corpes Route," *"Mio Cid" Studies*, ed. Alan D. Deyermond (London: Tamesis, 1977), 83–89; here 83. Montaner sees this description as formulaic but does admit that it is suited perfectly for these events. *Cantar* (see note 36), 164.

<sup>46</sup> On this point, see Montaner, *Cantar* (see note 36), 166, fn. 2719.

<sup>47</sup> In 1081, Miedes belonged to the Moorish Kingdom of Toledo, but under the protection of Alfonso VI (the Cid's lord) who, after the conquest of Toledo, incorporated it into his kingdom. This is the same Miedes mentioned in verse 412 of the poem as the site of the Cid's encampment on his ninth day of exile after leaving Vivar and entering Moorish territory. Today, near Miedes, one finds the "Peña del Cid," which marks the supposed place of the Cid's camp ([http://www.caminodelcid.org/Poblacion\\_MiedesdeAtienza.aspx](http://www.caminodelcid.org/Poblacion_MiedesdeAtienza.aspx), last accessed on 17 March 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Menéndez Pidal identifies a Montes Claros in the province of Guadalajara but this does not correspond to the more northerly route of the Infantes as traced by this critic. *Poema* (see note 40), 248. On Montes Claros, Michael agrees with Menéndez Pidal and states that "The mountains still known as the Montes Claros, where the Jarama rises, lie some 45 km. west of Atienza and south of Riaza, but they are much too far to the south-west to fit the itinerary described in the poem." "Geographic Problems" (see note 45), 83. Montaner maintains that the mention of Montes Claros is a geographic error. *Cantar* (see note 36), 165.

The reference to Griza or its caves,<sup>49</sup> which mark the final phase of the route to Corpes, is also obscure. We cannot ignore the symbolic potential for the inclusion of caves on the route.<sup>50</sup> Not only are caves associated with wilderness areas but they are also metaphorically sites of mystery or darkness. The caves provoke a sense of uneasiness as part of the growing dramatic tension that will culminate in the beating of Elvira and Sol. Furthermore, caves are symbols often associated with the feminine.<sup>51</sup> These mysterious caves remind us of the vulnerability of the two women as they journey further into the wilderness and away from the safety of their father's court. Whether or not the audience could specifically identify the geographic location of these caves is less important than their shared knowledge about the nature of caves as part of the potential dangers associated with finding oneself isolated in the wilderness.

As the Infantes de Carrión and their wives continue on their journey away from Valencia, the next site mentioned is San Esteban on the Duero River. This town is worth remembering since it is the one where Félez Muñoz will later take Elvira and Sol to recuperate after he finds them wounded and abandoned in the forest.<sup>52</sup> The town figures in the reverse route, i.e., the one the women will take on their return to Valencia. The town represents, in this sense, a place of safety under societal control where the women will be nursed back to health. It stands in sharp contrast to the lawless area of the forest of *Corpes* where the women will be abused.

When the retinue enters the *Robledo de Corpes*, the oak grove is described as surrounded by high mountains and populated by wild beasts: "Entrados son los ifantes al robredo de Corpes, / los montes son altos, las ramas pujan con las núes, / e las bestias fieras que andan aderredor" (vv. 2697–99)<sup>53</sup> (The princes enter the

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<sup>49</sup> The enigmatic reference to the caves near Griza—"assiniestro dexan a Griza que Álamos pobló, / allí son caños do a Elpha ençerró" (vv. 2694–95) (on the left, they went out of Griza and Alamos populated, / in that place there are caves where Elpha was imprisoned)—is explained by Duggan as allusions by a poet from San Esteban de Gormaz to local legends. Duggan, *The "Cantar de mio Cid"* (see note 29), 107. Michael considers it a garbled reference to a poplar grove on the river Ríaza. "Geographical Problems" (see note 45), 84.

<sup>50</sup> On this point, see Thomas Montgomery, *The Medieval Spanish Epic: Mythic Roots and Ritual Language*. Penn State Studies in Romance Languages (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1998), 51 where he states: "The strange locale of the Corpes episode, its imaginary geography and legendary history (Griza, Álamos, Elpha [2694–95]), its counterpoints of sinister and bucolic aspects, and the evening's sexual acceptance followed by the morning's brutal rejection, all point to a story that was once more complete in its details and motivations."

<sup>51</sup> José Antonio Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario de símbolos y mitos: las ciencias y las artes en su expresión figurada* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1984), 149.

<sup>52</sup> Initially Félez Muñoz leaves the women at the Torre de doña Urraca while he rides on to enlist the aid from the townsfolk of San Esteban. Se Montaner, *Cantar* (see note 36), 172, fn. 281.

<sup>53</sup> Menéndez Pidal believes that the *Robledo de Corpes* referred to in the poem has disappeared but that it did exist to the southeast of San Esteban de Gormaz, the same San Esteban referred to in

oak forest of Corpes, / the mountains are high, the branches push upwards toward the clouds, / and the wild beasts wander about). The forest encompasses a range of meanings in medieval texts. According to Rudd: "The word Forest could be used of actual, geographical areas only sparsely populated by trees, [and] it also seems true that literary and imagined forests were dense with trees, unkempt growth, and wild animals."<sup>54</sup> She also calls the forest a place of ambush and abduction and observes that "woods are attractive but unreliable places."<sup>55</sup> The multi-faceted associations with forests in medieval literature cannot be ignored in this examination of the *Robledo de Corpes*. Pearsall and Salter remind us that forests are associated with mystery and are often a place for testing or potential evil.<sup>56</sup> Whereas in medieval romance, the forest can be a place of testing for the hero, here in the *PMC* the forest serves to hide actions that would be considered cowardly, the antithesis of a heroic trial. Forests can also be a place of escape for lovers such as in Bérout's or Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*.<sup>57</sup> Again we see the perversion of this motif in the *PMC* where the *robledo* becomes a place not for lovers to hide their affair but rather for the Infantes to commit acts of violence on their wives in, literally, a place of cover.

The forest of Corpes, as reality and as symbol of "alien wilderness,"<sup>58</sup> will be the setting for two, diametrically opposed events. Initially, the spot where the Infantes and their retinue camp in the oak grove is described as "un vergel con una linpia fuent" (v. 2700) (a lush clearing with a clean spring). It is hard not to see the poet's deliberate distortion here of the description of the *locus amoenus*, as Montaner points out.<sup>59</sup> But the poet is also describing a setting which his audience would identify as ideal for a campsite, i.e., in a grassy clearing near clean water. The irony of the fact that this seemingly inviting locale will ultimately be the site for

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line 2696. *Poema* (see note 40), 74. Montaner maintains that it probably refers to a place near Castillejo de Robledo, some 20 km to the west of San Esteban de Gormaz. *Cantar* (see note 36), 165. Thus, we should not confuse the present-day *Robledo de Corpes* (to the south of Atienza) with the *Robledo* of the poem. The general direction the Infantes are traveling is northwest from Valencia toward Carrión de los Condes in the Province of Palencia. If they had arrived at the town which at present carries the name *Robledo de Corpes*, after passing through Atienza and Miedes as the poem indicates, they would have had to backtrack some 30 kms. to the south. The location near San Esteban de Gormaz is much more feasible if we take into account that Féliz Muñoz takes the wounded women to San Esteban, the nearest town, for care after they have been beaten. Michael discusses various conflicting theories about the location of *Robledo de Corpes* in his article "Geographical Problems" (see note 45), 85–86.

<sup>54</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 49.

<sup>55</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 83. See also Montaner, *Cantar* (see note 36), ccxviii–ccxx.

<sup>56</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 52.

<sup>57</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 53.

<sup>58</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 53.

<sup>59</sup> Montaner, *Cantar* (see note 36), 619. Montaner cites Curtius who includes groves as an element of the *locus amoenus* in *European Literature* (see note 36), 198.

deception and violence is emblematic of the poet's reliance on realistic description as well as metaphoric potential in depicting the setting.<sup>60</sup> Curtius explains away the campsite in the oak grove and the spring by stating that "we are here dealing not with a passage of realistic description but with the same epic landscape topos as cited from the Romance of Thebes."<sup>61</sup> While the Cid poet was probably aware of the topos he is appropriating, we should not necessarily conclude that his description is lacking in realism, and we should consider that it may also reflect his own experiences with nature. Favoring a realistic reading over one of the campsite as stock motif in no way diminishes the effectiveness of appropriating this pleasant setting to portray an unexpected scene of violence and bloodshed. The poet also includes the detail of the Infantes making love to their wives in this green and peaceful clearing in the wood on the night before they abuse them: "ý yazen essa noch, / con sus mugieres en braços demuéstranles amor" (vv. 2702–03) (and they lay that night, / with their wives in their arms showing them love). Even though the audience is aware of the Infantes' plan to exact revenge on their wives, the lovemaking is designed to deceive the women themselves who are later naturally shocked when their husbands abruptly turn on them and brutally beat them.<sup>62</sup>

The next morning, the Infantes dismiss all the servants and others traveling with them so that they may be alone with their wives, as the poem stipulates, so that "deportarse quieren con ellas a todo su sabor" (v. 2711) (take pleasure with them to their heart's delight). The use of the verb *deportarse*, meaning *solazarse*<sup>63</sup> or *holgarse*,<sup>64</sup> has various connotations. It can simply mean to relax or spend time pleasantly, but it can also imply a more specific pleasurable activity, such as making love. The allusion here to sport or enjoyment is thoroughly ironic because the Infantes announce, after all have left, that the *deportarse* they have in mind is

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<sup>60</sup> Sears interprets the contrast between the menacing forest and the pleasant clearing where the group camps: "Although the initial description telegraphs a feeling of menace and danger, the Infantes deceive their wives by creating within the threat its inverse, a veritable *locus amoenus*." Theresa Ann Sears, "Echado de tierra": Exile and the Psychopolitical Landscape in the Poema de mio Cid, Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 1998), 83. Also, see Haywood who asserts: "The *locus amoenus* with its associations of love and respite is ironically defiled by the beating of the Cid's daughters." "Symbolic Space" (see note 42), 120.

<sup>61</sup> Curtius, *European Literature* (see note 38), 202.

<sup>62</sup> See Sears, "Echado de tierra" (see note 60), 84. On this point, see also Zaderenko who points out that the poet is playing with the audience's expectations just as the Infantes' are playing with those of their wives. Irene Zaderenko, "Psicología, pervisión y temas jurídicos en la *Afrenta de Corpes*," *Revista de literatura medieval* 14.2 (2002): 135–47; here 138.

<sup>63</sup> Derived from *solaz*, meaning pleasure. Joan Corominas and José A. Pascual. *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico*, 6 vols. Biblioteca Románica Hispánica: V, Diccionarios, 7 (Madrid: Gredos, 1980), IV 293–94.

<sup>64</sup> In the sense of either *descansar* or *divertise*. Corominas, *Diccionario* (see note 63), III, 375.

the ridicule and abuse of their wives: “aquí seredes escarnidas, en estos fieros montes” (v. 2715) (Here you will be shamed in these wild environs). They remind the women that there are no witnesses to what is about to take place and that they are in a potentially hostile environment (“fieros montes”), where they expect no rescue or help from passers-by. We are prepared, to a certain extent, to expect cowardly and deceptive behavior from the Infantes de Carrión, but the cruel physical attack on the women goes beyond cowardice.<sup>65</sup> The Infantes also announce that they plan to abandon the women and that they will never see nor inherit lands in Carrión as they had been promised: “oy nos partiremos, e dexadas seredes de nós, / non abredes part en tierras de Carrión” (vv. 2716–17) (today we are departing and leaving you behind, / you will have no part in the lands of Carrión). Carrión, the estate lands of the Infantes, is contrasted with the forest of Corpes. The former was a large managed estate with a significant population and infrastructures, an important stop on the Camino de Santiago.<sup>66</sup> The forest of Corpes, on the other hand, is an uninhabited wilderness, a space where two abandoned and injured women would have little chance for survival.

The Infantes beat their wives severely and leave them for dead. They expect them to be devoured by the wild beasts, already alluded to in the description of the forest, or simply die of exposure. Félez Muñoz, the cousin of Elvira and Sol and loyal friend of the Cid, had been among the party accompanying the Cid's daughters on their trip to Carrión.<sup>67</sup> Although the Infantes had sent the entire group ahead of them while they stayed behind in the oak grove with their wives, Félez Muñoz became suspicious and pulled away from the group. From his hiding place beside the road, he sees the Infantes riding by alone. He quickly backtracks to the *robledo* where he finds the women near death. Some of the natural elements mentioned in the rescue are also worthy of note. For example, Félez Muñoz hides

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<sup>65</sup> Many critics, since the middle of the last century, have analyzed the psychological motivations behind the actions and attitudes of the Infantes de Carrión. Some of the most important are Eleazar Huerta, *Poética del “Mio Cid”* (Santiago de Chile: Nuevo Extremos, 1948); Thomas R. Hart, “The Infantes de Carrión,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 33 (1956): 17–24; Ulrich Leo, “La ‘Afrenta de Corpes,’ novela psicológica,” *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 13 (1959): 291–304; Roger Walker, “A Possible Source for the ‘Afrenta de Corpes’ Episode in the *Poema de mio Cid*,” *Modern Language Review* 72 (1977): 335–47; Colin Smith, *The Making of the “Poema de mio Cid”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Alan Deyermond, “La sexualidad en la épica medieval española,” *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 36 (1988): 767–86; Theresa Ann Sears, “*Echado de tierra*” (see note 60); and Alfonso Boix Jovaní, “El erotismo en el *Cantar de Mio Cid*,” *Revista de literatura medieval* 14.1 (2002): 47–52.

<sup>66</sup> Carrión also represents safety for the Infantes. Zaderenko, “Psicología” (see note 62), 142.

<sup>67</sup> According to Montaner, the Cid had sent Félez Muñoz with the retinue to inspect the properties that the Infantes were to hand over as wedding gifts to Elvira and Sol. He does not feel that the Cid was using this inspection as an excuse to send Félez Muñoz with the women because he suspected the Infantes might harm them but that he was actually concerned that the lands would not be valuable and, thus, unsuitable as a wedding prize. *Cantar* (see note 36), 161, n. 2621.

in a “monte espesso,” or thick forest, while waiting for the Infantes to appear on the road.<sup>68</sup> The poem emphasizes that Félez Muñoz chose a hiding place where he could observe without being detected. When he returns to the oak grove and finds the women, he tries to revive them and implores them: “¡Despertedes, primas, por amor del Criador, / mientras que es el día, ante que entre la noch, / los ganados fieros non nos coman en aqueste mont!” (vv. 2787–89) (Wake up, for the love of God, / while it is still day and before night falls, / so that the wild animals do not eat us in this forest).

The initial description of the *robleado* included the fact that it was populated by “bestias fieras” (v. 2699) (wild beasts), and Félez Muñoz’s remarks here serve to reinforce the danger that the forest creatures pose to humans, especially during the dark of night. In fact, Félez Muñoz seems just as fearful of an attack by wild animals as he is that the women’s injuries may prove fatal.<sup>69</sup> Their loss of blood has rendered them nearly comatose and this same spilling of blood is likely to attract predators in the night. The allusion to wild animals at the beginning of the Corpes incident and near the end when the women are rescued can be interpreted in at least two ways: firstly, from the outset the forest is presented as a site for potential dangers to the humans who find themselves there and, secondly, the Infantes act like ferocious creatures of the forest when they attack their wives, ripping the flesh from their bodies with their spurs and cinches of their saddles.<sup>70</sup> In the eyes of the Infantes Fernando and Diego, spilling their wives’ blood serves to erase the humiliation they had suffered at the Cid’s court while also sully the honor of their father-in-law.<sup>71</sup> The fact that the women’s blood may attract wild creatures even more dangerous than the Infantes heightens the pathos of the scene.

We should also note that the last thing the Infantes say to Elvira and Sol before beating them refers to another wild beast, specifically the lion which had escaped in the Cid’s court at the beginning of the third *cantar*: “nós vengaremos por aquésta la del león” (v. 2719) (we will avenge ourselves for that business with the

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<sup>68</sup> The multiple meaning of *monte* as “forest” or as “mountain” has been pointed out by Menéndez Pidal. But Corominas explains that, in the *PMC*, *monte* is used exclusively as a synonym for forests or groves of trees (*Diccionario* (see note 63), IV, 131).

<sup>69</sup> Smith and Walker assert: “without the intervention of Félez Muñoz, they would surely have died, as the Infantes intended. Their cousin’s attempts to revive them are all the more urgent because he fears death for all of them if they are trapped in the forest by darkness” (“Did the Infantes de Carrión intend to Kill the Cid’s Daughters?” (see note 41), 8. Montaner states that, in a medieval Castilian forest, the wild beasts most likely to be encountered were bears, wolves, lynxes, or wild boar. *Cantar* (see note 36), 165, fn. 2699).

<sup>70</sup> For an analysis of the objects the Infantes use to harm their wives, see María Eugenia Lacarra, *El “Poema de mio Cid”: realidad histórica e ideología* (Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1980), 89, fn.192.

<sup>71</sup> For a discussion of the loss of honor see Smith and Walker’s article, “Did the Infantes de Carrión intend to Kill the Cid’s Daughters?” (see note 41)

lion).<sup>72</sup> The Infantes, of course, fled and hid when the lion appeared. Their fear and lack of concern for anyone's safety but their own is what had set in motion their loss of face among the Cid's retinue. The meeting with a wild animal, albeit in a household setting, foreshadows the potentially dangerous encounters with fierce beasts that may occur in the *robledo* where the Infantes will also act like wild beasts during the attack on their wives.

The lion at the Cid's court is certainly an indicator of the hero's power and leadership since he can literally tame even the king of beasts.<sup>73</sup> We recall that when the Cid awakens and finds the lion has escaped from its cage, he calmly grabs the animal by the scruff of its neck to keep it from harming anyone: "Mio Cid don Rodrigo al cuello lo tomó / e liévalo adestrando, en la red le metió" (vv. 2300–01) (The Cid don Rodrigo took him by the neck / and led him into the cage where he put him). The Cid's reaction to the escaped lion not only stands in stark contrast with the cowardice of the Infantes,<sup>74</sup> it also calls attention to the vulnerability of the Cid's daughters to possible attack by wild animals in the *robledo de Corpes* where their father is not present to protect them as he had when he subdued the lion in Valencia. In his court the Cid holds sway over all—beast and human—but, in the wilderness, the power tends to shift in favor of the wild animals and the bestial behavior of the Infantes de Carrión.

After the badly beaten women are found by Félez Muñoz, the escape from the forest to the bosom of civilization is of utmost importance. He takes them to the nearby town of San Esteban de Gormaz whose people genuinely grieve for the harm inflicted on the Cid's daughters—"pesóles de corazón" (v. 2821) (they were heartbroken). They give the women aid and comfort and nurse them back to health: "a llas fijas del Cid danles esfuerço. / Allí sovieron ellas fata que sanas son" (vv. 2822–23) (they gave strength to the daughters of the Cid. / They stayed there until they were well again). The welcoming confines of San Esteban de Gormaz stand in contrast to the forest of Corpes where danger and brutality had prevailed. In the town setting, the wilderness is kept at bay and Elvira and Sol return from their incursion into the untamed forest to a place of nurture.<sup>75</sup> When they are well

<sup>72</sup> On this point see Montgomery, *Medieval Spanish Epic* (see note 50), 55–56.

<sup>73</sup> Montgomery, *Medieval Spanish Epic* (see note 50), 47, fn. 34 discusses the choice of lion in this incident. Sears sees an association of the lion with King Alfonso: "Alfonso was *leonés* and so we can associate the lion with him as well, in which case the Infantes are also shown to be less than ideal representatives of their *reino*" ("*Echado de tierra*" (see note 60), 73.

<sup>74</sup> On this point, see Francisco López Estrada, *Panorama crítico sobre el Poema del Cid* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1982), 235–36 and Sears, "*Echado de tierra*" (see note 60), 73.

<sup>75</sup> On this point see Smith and Walker who observe: "The girls themselves realize how close they have come to death at the hands of their evil husbands when they tell Minaya in San Esteban to thank God for their deliverance." "Did the Infantes de Carrión Intend to Kill the Cid's Daughters?" (see note 41), 8.

enough the women return to Valencia with a host of protectors who come to join their retinue. Haywood points out that the warm welcome the women receive in Valencia indicates that their honor is not irrevocably lost and prefigures the restitution of their honor with the two marriage proposals they receive during the Cortes scene.<sup>76</sup>

Another important aspect in the Cortes episode, briefly mentioned before, is the land in Carrión which the Infantes ostensibly want to present to their wives. Michael Harney observes that the Infantes, when concurring about the plot to remove Elvira and Sol from the Cid's court, refer to *villas* (manorial holdings) and estates in Carrión which formed part of the Infantes' marriage gifts to their wives.<sup>77</sup> When they ask for the Cid's permission to take Elvira and Sol to Carrión, they specifically refer to the rights of inheritance of properties which will belong to any offspring born to them: "Verán vuestras hijas lo que avemos nós, / los hijos que oviéremos en qué avrán partición" (vv. 2566–67) (Your daughters will see what we own, / the children that we have will inherit parts of it).<sup>78</sup> As we have seen, before they beat their wives, the Infantes declare that the women will never see nor enjoy the territories they gained through marriage: "non abredes part en tierras de Carrión" (v. 2717) (you will have no part in the lands of Carrión). The idea of estates here is important. The lands and properties referred to represent part of the *donatio* that the Infantes paid to the Cid and there is significant value attached to these estates.<sup>79</sup> These lands represent the wealth and power of the Infantes who exercise authority over the properties and people who live on them. The Infantes overstep their bounds, both physically and morally, when they extend this exercise of authority they enjoy in Carrión to unrestricted power over their wives.<sup>80</sup> When they are in the forest wilderness, the privileges and responsibilities linked to their position as nobles in Carrión are discarded in favor of brutal and uncivilized behavior. The properties in Carrión, along with the Cortes that King Alfonso VI calls in Toledo, and the Cid's court in Valencia, are all sites where one's actions are

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<sup>76</sup> Haywood, "Symbolic Space" (see note 42), 119.

<sup>77</sup> Harney, *Kinship and Polity* (see note 29), 131.

<sup>78</sup> Haywood speaks of the Infantes' cowardice as motive for their desire to return to Carrión, "the center of their identity." "Symbolic Space" (see note 42), 117. She further observes that "Just as the Cid will later use a ruse to manipulate them in the Cort scene, the Infantes use a ruse to persuade him to allow the girls to go." "Symbolic Space" (see note 42), 117.

<sup>79</sup> On this point, see Pavlović and Walker, "Money, Marriage and the Law" (see 29).

<sup>80</sup> For example, in the Cortes, García Ordóñez expresses his opinion that the Infantes did no wrong toward their wives since they (the Infantes) are of higher noble status than the daughters of the Cid and Elvira and Sol were mere *barraganas*, not deserving of the respect due to honorably married women. See verses 3275–77. On the question of the legitimacy of the marriages and the superior attitude of the infantes, see Harney, chapter three, "Marriage," in *Kinship and Polity* (see note 29).

constrained or regulated. The forest of Corpes, by contrast, is the site where unlawful behavior may go unnoticed or unchecked.

After the Cid learns of the brutal attack on his daughters, he complains to King Alfonso who calls the Infantes to answer the charges of the Cid in Toledo. Initially, the Infantes refuse to attend the Cortes in the city that represents a traditional seat of power in Castile: “ruegan al rey que los quite d’esta cort” (v. 2989) (they begged the king to excuse them from the assembly). But, of course, the king’s will prevails and the Infantes, along with many members of their family and household, travel to Toledo. After the Cortes, in which the Cid and his company challenge the Infantes and their older brother to judicial combat, the Infantes petition King Alfonso to hold the trials in Carrión because their arms and horses are there. The King accedes to this petition but the Cid decides to return to Valencia rather than being present at the judicial battles.<sup>81</sup> The fact that the Infantes will be defeated on their own properties, in the place where they had previously felt secure in their privileged position, is certainly a nod to poetic justice.<sup>82</sup> It is significant that the Infantes will be humiliated in their own territory with their family and vassals as witnesses to their defeat.<sup>83</sup> Just as the forest had been a site of shame and physical danger for the Cid’s daughters, now the ancestral lands of Carrión will be the locale for the peril and humiliation that the Infantes must endure. Thus, the contrast between the forest as a zone of potential hazard, and properties under human control as zones of safety, is shaken up in the closing scenes of the *PMC*.

An emphasis on a close reading of the natural settings in the *Afrenta de Corpes* does not preclude either the traditionalists’ view of the historical accuracy of places and itineraries or the symbolic potential of sites described in the *PMC*.<sup>84</sup> Also, as Classen reminds us, although the *Poema de Mio Cid* follows the pattern of all heroic epics, it stands out for its careful attention to the details of its natural

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<sup>81</sup> Sears argues that for the Infantes to assert themselves and harm the Cid’s daughters, they must distance themselves from the Cid’s seat of power: “A courtier’s low cunning has allowed them to discern that, first of all, the Cid has vested himself fully in the new, vital center that he has established in Valencia, and they believe that they can escape his power if they leave that center.” “*Echado de tierra*” (see note 60), 79.

<sup>82</sup> The Cid had clearly expressed his desire to remain in Valencia rather than go to Toledo or, later, to Carrión: “Más quiero a Valencia que tierras de Carrión” (v. 3474) (I love Valencia more than the lands of Carrión).

<sup>83</sup> Harney, *Kinship and Polity* (see note 29), 218. On the dishonor of the Infantes, Smith and Walker state: “The two young men are deliberately spared in the final duels, in which they might easily have been killed so that they may live with their dishonour made public before their own family and vassals and confirmed by the judgment of God.” “Did the Infantes de Carrión Intend to Kill the Cid’s Daughters?” (see note 41), 10.

<sup>84</sup> On this point, Evernden reminds us: “Symbolic meaning is every bit as much a part of nature as are its physical properties.” Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 45.

settings, “almost as we are wont to observe it normally in late-medieval literature.”<sup>85</sup> These spaces are essential to the narrative and its structure.<sup>86</sup> They are produced from an intersection of literary, social, economic, and political considerations. The fundamental idea of the forest, as opposed to one’s community, constituted a limit or frontier for medieval peoples. Pinet observes that in a society that codified everything in binary terms, e.g., high/low, here/there, it was inevitable that the opposition between center and margin should occur.<sup>87</sup> In the *Afrenta de Corpes*, the attack on the Cid’s daughters must occur outside the center, in a wild forest beyond societal or legal control, whereas the restitution of honor must occur in the Cortes and on the field of combat that represent centers of authority. The events of the *Afrenta de Corpes* require the natural setting of the wild forest (margin) in contrast to urbanized settings, such as Cid’s court in Valencia, the Cortes of Toledo, or the town of San Esteban de Gormaz (center). Either a literal cartographical reading or an exclusively symbolic reading of these spaces, however, limits our appreciation of the dramatic tensions and nuanced construction of settings achieved by the Cid poet.<sup>88</sup> Nor can the natural settings where these events occur be considered merely as backdrop. If we ignore the careful description given of the natural environs both of the journey to Corpes as well as of the oak grove itself, we are overlooking clues to the poet’s perception of the natural world around him and how he incorporated it into his literary text. As noted earlier, the poet was certainly aware that the natural settings he describes evoked symbolic associations, but that does not mean that his audience would only appreciate descriptions of nature on this level. The idea of the forest, as well as those of ancestral properties or royal courts, held a variety of connotative meanings for the audience of the *PMC* but that same public would have been keenly conscious of the natural world around them and sensitive to nuances in its description.

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<sup>85</sup> Classen, “Introduction,” *Rural Space* (see note 5), 37.

<sup>86</sup> Pinet, “Para leer” (see note 32), 201.

<sup>87</sup> Pinet, “Para leer” (see note 32), 203. On this point see also Juan Manuel Cacho Bleuca, “El espacio en el *Cantar de Mio Cid*,” *Revista Historia Jerónimo Zurita* 55 (1987): 23–42; here especially 41–42.

<sup>88</sup> See Pinet on the constructions of landscape in the *PMC*. “Para leer” (see note 32), 208.



## Chapter Two

### Desert and Mountains: *Vida de Sant María Egipciaca*, *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, and *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*

The motif of an individual living in isolation in the desert or other harsh environment is an essential element in many of the biographies of Christian saints from the earliest accounts found in Greek and Latin sources.<sup>89</sup> These inhospitable settings are part of the experience of extreme asceticism which Elizabeth Petroff describes as “a radical turning away from the public and secular world in order to live the life of the angels while still in the body.”<sup>90</sup> Saints who go off into the desert or mountains suffer unimaginable hardships, deny themselves all corporal comforts, and are commonly tempted by demonic forces.<sup>91</sup> In hagiographic accounts, the isolated and wild environs where the ascetics live are often described in detail and work as active agents to transform them into models of saintly piety. A close reading of descriptions of these settings brings to the forefront the realities of the physical suffering the saints endure and also a host of symbolic associations and Biblical parallels.

Alfred Siewers has studied the importance of the desert in the lives of the ascetics in terms of the “other world.”<sup>92</sup> For example, in St. Athanasius’s *Life of St. Anthony*, Anthony reportedly states that the desert wilderness is as essential for

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<sup>89</sup> For a history of early ascetics and ascetic practice, see Philip Rousseau *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*. The Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 111.

<sup>91</sup> On temptation in a wilderness environment, see Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty* (see note 31), 50–52.

<sup>92</sup> Defined by Howard Patch as a place yearned for or desired, whether in this world or the next. See Howard R. Patch, *The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

living the ascetic life as the sea is for fish.<sup>93</sup> This “self-realizing and creative sense of sacrifice” found a natural ally in the desert environment.<sup>94</sup> These will be key factors in the Spanish hagiographic texts examined in this chapter.

As a first example of the key role of the desert in hagiographic texts I will examine the thirteenth-century Spanish poem, the *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca*.<sup>95</sup> I will show how the desert becomes an active agent for change in Mary’s life, both inwardly and outwardly. The desert is not simply a metaphor or backdrop but a carefully crafted setting that is key to understanding the transformation of Mary of Egypt into a model of saintly devotion. In his descriptions of the desert, the poet of the *VSME* creates a dialectical tension between two simultaneous and intersecting planes of interpretation—the desert as natural reality and as figurative space of exile, suffering, or temptation.

Versions of the story of Saint Mary of Egypt, the repentant prostitute who lived as a desert anchorite for nearly fifty years, circulated as early as the seventh century.<sup>96</sup> The thirteenth-century anonymous version in Spanish includes most of the locales commonly found in Mary’s story, such as Egypt, Alexandria and Jerusalem. The desert, however, is the primary setting for events in the poem and essential for Mary’s transformation from sinner to saint. The desert functions as both geographic space and metaphor for repentance. Mary submits herself to the harshest of environments and lives to tell her story to a monk who, in turn, recounts it to others. In the desert, she acquires extraordinary powers such as the ability to levitate and walk on the surface of water. Her extreme asceticism and miraculous abilities combine to make her a saintly figure of near-Biblical stature.

First, I will briefly recap Mary’s story as it is presented in the *VSME*.<sup>97</sup> The poem introduces its protagonist as “hua duenya muy loçana” (v. 20) (a very vivacious woman) and as a “fermosa pecador” (v. 24) (beautiful sinner).<sup>98</sup> After quoting a few ideas from St. Augustine about sin, the poet describes the lascivious life Mary had lived since her childhood. Her delight in carnal pleasures led her to have sexual relationships with her relatives and, later, with any man who asked for her

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<sup>93</sup> Siewers, *Strange Beauty* (see note 31), 11.

<sup>94</sup> Siewers, *Strange Beauty* (see note 31), 30.

<sup>95</sup> Hereafter *VSME*.

<sup>96</sup> Mary of Egypt supposedly lived in the fifth century and the earliest known version of her life was written in Greek in the seventh century.

<sup>97</sup> The Spanish *VSME* is a translation of the French poem, *Vie de Sainte Marie l’Egyptienne*.

<sup>98</sup> For the *VSME*, I have used Manuel Alvar’s edition based on Escorial ms. k-III-4: *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca: estudios, vocabulario, edición de los textos*, 2 vols. Clásicos Hispánicos, Serie 2, 18 and 19 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1970–1972). I give verse numbers in parentheses for quotes from the text. All translations are my own. A Spanish prose version of the legend, the *Estoria de Santa María Egipcíaca*, also based on the poem in French, is found in Escorial ms. h-I-13. See Roger M. Walker, ed. *Estoria de Santa María Egipcíaca*, Exeter Hispanic Texts (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1972).

favors. At the age of twelve, she tired of her parents' objections to her lifestyle and decided to sail to Alexandria where she hoped to earn more money as a prostitute. She was so successful in Alexandria that her presence there disrupted the peace since quarrels often broke out among the many men vying for her company. A long description of Mary's physical beauty, her elegant dress and charming speech follows. One day in the harbor she spied a group of pilgrims en route to Jerusalem and, on a whim, she decided to join them. Even though she earned a good living as a prostitute, she also spent lavishly so the only payment for passage that she could offer to the sailors was her body. No one on board, sailor or pilgrim, could resist her:

Non abia hi tan ensenyado  
 siquier mançebo siquier cano,  
 non hi fue tan casto  
 que con ella non fiziesse pecado. (vv. 373–376)

[There was no one disciplined enough  
 neither youth or old man,  
 nor any so chaste  
 that did not sin with her.].

When Mary arrived in Jerusalem she again was very successful as a prostitute and men found her irresistible. On the day of the Ascension, she joined a group of pilgrims heading toward the church, but when she tried to enter, a troop of armed angels blocked her entrance. She then realized the enormity of her sinful past and repented. The Virgin Mother, herself, appeared to Mary and, when she is finally allowed to enter the church, she heard a voice telling her to go to the River Jordan, take communion in the church of St. John, and then go into the desert to live.<sup>99</sup> She wandered alone in the desert for some forty-seven years.<sup>100</sup> During these years, her appearance was completely altered: her skin became parched and black, her clothes disintegrated, and she ate only when an angel brought her food.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> On visions as a feature of the lives of the ascetics, see Rousseau, *Ascetics* (see note 89), 28–29.

<sup>100</sup> The penance of forty-seven years corresponds to the forty-seven days of Lent as Foster points out. David William Foster, *Christian Allegory in Early Hispanic Poetry*. Studies in Romance Languages, 4 (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 115.

<sup>101</sup> A number of critics have commented on the stark contrasts between the descriptions of the voluptuous body of Mary, the prostitute, and the repugnant sight of her in the desert. They contrast her outer beauty which harbors a sinful soul when she is living a wanton life with her horrible physical appearance and beautiful soul when she lives in the wilderness. See, as examples: Ernesto E. Delgado, "Ascetas y penitentes en el discurso de los Padres de la Iglesia: hacia una revisión histórica del modelo hagriográfico de la leyenda de Santa María Egipcíaca en la Alta Edad Media," *Romance Quarterly* 50.4 (2003): 281–301; Anthony J. Cárdenas, "The Desert Experience as Other World in the *Poema de Santa María Egipcíaca*," *Romance Languages Annual* 7 (1995): 413–18; Michael Solomon, "Catarsis Sexual: La *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca* y el texto

After years of isolation, Mary encountered a monk, Gozimás, who was wandering the desert as part of his Lenten penance. Gozimás covered her with his own cloak since she was completely naked. He then watched in amazement as Mary levitated and hovered above the ground. She asked him to hear her confession. He agreed and then departed. Gozimás and Mary next met a year later on the banks of the Jordan. The monk saw Mary approaching him walking on the surface of water. Mary told him that he could find her the following year at the same place in the desert where they had originally met. When Gozimás returned to that spot the next year, he found Mary dead and, with the help of a lion, he buried her. He returned to the monastery and publicized the remarkable life and repentance of the woman whom he had met in the desert.

Once she rejects her life of prostitution and sin and becomes a desert anchorite, Heron observes that "Mary becomes aligned with several powerful figures."<sup>102</sup> For example, she initially takes three loaves of bread into the desert and these miraculously sustain her during her first seventeen years in the wilderness. This life-giving bread reminds us, of course, of the bread of the Eucharist as well as the manna which rained down from Heaven for Moses and the Israelites (Exodus 16:4–5), and Christ's multiplication of the five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:17–21). Her levitation in the presence of Gozimás brings to mind Christ's ascension, and her walk on the water is reminiscent of Christ walking on the Sea of Galilee to the boat that carried the frightened apostles during a storm (Matthew 14:25).<sup>103</sup>

Before her conversion, the poet of the *VSME* takes great delight in describing Mary's physical charms, her sexual escapades and stresses her desirability. By contrast, after she endures years of exposure in the desert, her beauty is completely obliterated and she is no longer easily recognizable as woman. In her new state of physical deterioration, accompanied by spiritual renewal, she joins the ranks of other female ascetics who were seen as losing their feminine characteristics. Susanna Elm states that women living in the desert "became men" not only in the sense that they equaled their male counterparts in the strength of

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higiénico," *Erotismo en la letras hispánicas: aspectos, modos y fronteras*, ed. Luce López-Baralt and Francisco Márquez Villanueva. Publicaciones de la Nueva revista de filología hispánica, 7 (México, DF: El Colegio de México, 1995): 425–37; John R. Maier, "Sainthood, Heroism, and Sexuality in the *Estoria de Santa María Egipcíaca*," *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos* 8 (1983–84): 424–35; Connie L. Scarborough, "Santa María de Egipto: la vitalidad de la leyenda en castellano," *Actas del XII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas. Tomo I: Medieval y Lingüística*, ed. Aengus W. Ward (Birmingham, UK: The University of Birmingham, 1998): 302–10; and, Lynn Rice Cortina, "The Aesthetics of Morality: Two Portraits of Mary of Egypt in the *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca*," *Hispanic Journal* 2.1 (1980–1981): 41–45.

<sup>102</sup> Onnaca Heron, "The Lioness in the Text: Mary of Egypt as Immaculated Female Saint," *Quidditas: Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 21 (2000): 23–44; here 28.

<sup>103</sup> Heron, "The Lioness (see note 102)" 28.

their conviction and dedication to ascetic practice, but also, in some instances, in physical appearance.<sup>104</sup> This is certainly true in the case of Mary of Egypt. When Gozimás first sighted Mary in the desert he was not sure if she was a man or a woman: “sombra vio que era / de omne ho de fembra” (v. 932–933) (he saw a phantom that could have been either male or female). Delgado also speaks about the transformation of a woman ascetic in the desert into virile beings “tanto en el ámbito conceptual como en el físico, ya que una prolongada estadía en las drásticas condiciones del desierto, efectivamente eliminaba los rasgos externos que culturalmente la habían caracterizado”<sup>105</sup> (as much in the conceptual sense as in the physical, since a prolonged exposure to the drastic conditions of the desert, effectively eliminated those external traits that culturally had characterized her). The desert is the powerful agent that alters even societal constructions of gender and turns Mary, the desirable woman, into an asexual being who is the equal of any devout and stoic male in her ascetic denial of corporal comfort.<sup>106</sup>

The desert, with its horrific conditions of drought, extremes of heat and cold, and relentless sun are necessary for the destruction of Mary’s beauty. Her beauty, according to the *VSME*, was the root of all her sinfulness as well as what caused others to sin with her. Mary’s beauty did harm to men, not only in a literal sense since they fought amongst themselves in competition for her, but also in a spiritual sense since men could not resist such beauty and committed sin in their desire to possess her physically. In the desert she becomes essentially androgynous, the antithesis of her former self, and Gozimás recognizes her as a great servant of God whose story can inspire faith in others.<sup>107</sup> By enduring the harshness of the desert, Mary finds a way to bridge the chasm between an existence based on physical beauty and carnal pleasure to a life centered on spiritual devotion and freedom from all bodily desires.

Desert is often used as a synonym for wilderness and implies an uninhabited and potentially hostile environment. Rudd contends that the wilderness is defined by its unknowability: “wilderness resists the entry of humans to such a degree that those who enter it tend to be dehumanised in one way or another.”<sup>108</sup> Mary is dehumanized in various ways after years spent in the desert. As earlier noted, the harsh environment destroys her physical appearance to the point that she can no longer be identified easily as male or female. On the metaphorical level, she has

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<sup>104</sup> Susanna K. Elm, *“Virgins of God”: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 271.

<sup>105</sup> Delgado, “Ascetas y penitentes” (see note 101), 287.

<sup>106</sup> On this point Heron notes that Mary’s body becomes physically immasculated to such an extent that she becomes aligned “with the male prophet/savior figure on a spiritual level.” Heron, “The Lioness” (see note 102), 28.

<sup>107</sup> See verses 973–75.

<sup>108</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 91.

become a being composed of spirit, rather than flesh, as evidenced by her miraculous power to levitate. Rudd also contends that, “the wilderness... becomes the place in which the mysterious can act as a palpable force, often being embodied in a being who is not necessarily bound by human rules.”<sup>109</sup> I can think of no more apt example of the power of the wilderness to release one from restraints of the physical world than that of Mary of Egypt. When Gozimás saw Mary levitate, he initially reacted with fear, witnessing this “fantasma” (v. 1118) (specter) floating above him, but he later recognized that Mary had surpassed human limitations and that he is in the presence of a saint on earth. Gozimás asks Mary to give him a blessing. Although, under normal circumstances, a male monastic would not ask a woman, a former prostitute at that, to bless him, in the desert he does not feel bound by convention, wanting only to share in Mary’s spiritual strength. The desert wilderness is the site for events that defy societal convention as well as the natural order.<sup>110</sup>

Maier, discussing the prose *Estoria de Santa Maria Egipçiaca*, makes a number of observations about the desert that are also applicable to the poetic *VSME*. For example, Maier contends that “Mary perfects her relationship with the divine object [i.e., God] by willingly submitting to the purgation of the desert.”<sup>111</sup> As a perfected being she represents a model of piety for Gozimás. Just as the desert is the place where Mary is spiritually and physically transformed, the monk, too, is forever changed by his meetings there with Mary. Rudd contends that in the desert, humans risk “losing themselves, not merely geographically but also in terms of their identity, and it is this which makes wilderness a site of trial and transformation.”<sup>112</sup> Mary has clearly lost her identity as beautiful prostitute after her sojourn in the desert and is recreated as a new being—an ascetic, a model of piety, and a saint.

On her second encounter with Gozimás, Mary walked across the waters of the River Jordan to meet him. This act is, of course, reminiscent of Christ’s walking on the surface of the Sea of Galilee as Maier<sup>113</sup> and Cárdenas<sup>114</sup> have observed. Also, the use of the Jordan River in the poem evokes a wide variety of related imagery—the baptism of Christ by John takes place in the Jordan (Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:21–22); Moses inspired the Israelites to take up arms to secure land over the River Jordan (Numbers 32:21); the flow of the River Jordan is cut off when the ark of the covenant was carried across it (Joshua 4:07); and,

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<sup>109</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 92.

<sup>110</sup> Delgado sees Mary as destabilizing the established order. Delgado, “Ascetas y penitentes” (see note 101), 287.

<sup>111</sup> Maier, “Sainthood, Heroism, and Sexuality” (see note 101), 427.

<sup>112</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 93.

<sup>113</sup> Maier, “Sainthood” (see note 101), 430.

<sup>114</sup> Cárdenas, “The Desert Experience” (see note 101), 417.

Naaman is cured of leprosy after Elisha told him to bathe in the River Jordan seven times (II Kings 4:10). The Biblical significance of the River Jordan was obvious to readers of the *VSME* and serves to heighten the perception of Mary as a saintly figure. She miraculously walked on the water of the same river where Jesus was baptized and this close association with such an important moment in the life of Christ is a sign that Mary has been reborn as a redeemed soul. Her ordeal in the wilderness has served the same purpose as baptism because her sins have been washed away by its power to reshape and change her identity.<sup>115</sup>

Water introduces a new element into the process of the transformation of Mary from sinner to saint.<sup>116</sup> The fact that she accepts a drink of water from Gozimás after she receives communion from him signals that her ordeal in the desert is coming to an end. According to Delgado, participating in the Eucharist was Mary's final obligatory step toward complete reconciliation with the Church.<sup>117</sup> She has been fed spiritually by receiving the Eucharist and she now partakes of water which she had so long denied herself in the desert. In a place usually associated with a lack of food and water, Mary is fed on the body of Christ and given water as a sign of eternal life. She is reaching the end of her desert ordeal.

After she received communion from the monk, Mary prayed that she might join the company of heavenly hosts, stating that she had faithfully served the Lord for the last forty-seven years. As we have seen, Mary soon after died peacefully in her desert home and Gozimás found her body in the exact spot she had earlier indicated to him. Her body had suffered no decay beyond the weathered and withered appearance that it had assumed after a nearly half-century of desert exposure. At her head, the monk found an inscription very legibly written in the sand:

Prent, Goximás, el cuerpo de María,  
sotiérral hoy en este día;  
cuando lo habrás soterrado,  
ruega por éll, que así te es acomendado. (vv. 1373–76)

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<sup>115</sup> Pérez-Rioja comments on water's symbolic power to obliterate past history and purify, as most clearly represented in the rite of baptism. a, *Diccionario de símbolos y mitos* (see note 51), 49.

<sup>116</sup> Maier speaks of water imagery in the story of Saint Mary the Egyptian in Jungian terms. Jung associated water with the unconscious and cited, as examples, case histories of dreams and myths in which the protagonists descend into the water in order to rise up to some new height or to bring home a treasure. Maier states that "Just as the dreamers and protagonists must cross the waters to ascend to the heights of some image of wholeness . . . just as they have necessarily delved into the unconscious before wholeness is achieved, so also has Mary undergone the journey down through the unconscious, been purged of the divisive concupiscent tendencies, and had the flow of *caritas* into her spirit unblocked." Maier, "Sainthood" (see note 101), 431.

<sup>117</sup> Delgado, "Ascetas y penitentes" (see note 101), 294.

[Gozimás, take the body of Mary  
bury it this very day;  
when you have buried it,  
pray for her, this is your commission.]

Gozimás regretted that he was alone because he knew it would be a difficult task for one man to dig a grave in the hardened soil of the desert. But miraculously, a lion appeared to help him to fulfill his mission.<sup>118</sup> On the appearance of the lion, Heron observes that “in a desert wasteland where no such life forms have been espied by Mary or the monk for decades, a lion suddenly appears as a kind of *deus ex machina* to dig the deceased Mary’s grave.”<sup>119</sup> The lion in the poem is completely tame: “maguer que era bestia fiera, / manso va do el cuerpo era” (vv. 1389–1390) (even though he was a wild beast, / tamely he went to where the body was). Just as Mary had conquered her lustful nature, this wild and ferocious beast changed its natural instinct and gladly assisted Gozimás in his task of burying the saint.<sup>120</sup> Gozimás thanks the lion for his service when they finish the grave: “Compannyero, idvos en paz, / bien sé que Dios por María faz” (vv. 1411–1412) (Comrade, go your way in peace, / I know full well what God has done for María).<sup>121</sup>

Cárdenas uses the term, “Other World,” to describe the desert setting for Mary’s physical and spiritual transformation. He calls it a space “for experiencing something other than the commonplace.”<sup>122</sup> Certainly, the ability to survive for decades with very little food or water, levitating, walking on water, and the taming of a fierce wild animal are not commonplace events. The desert wilderness is the space where God works these miracles and, most importantly, the miracle of the transformation of wanton prostitute into saint. Mary voluntarily decided

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<sup>118</sup> One legend associated with St. Paul of Thebes (d. 347 AD), often called the first hermit, was that of two lions digging his grave. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), I: 85. Our poet certainly would have known this legend. He would also have known about St. Jerome, who, while living as a monk in Bethlehem, cleaned and bandaged the wounded paw of a lion that entered the monastery. The lion afterwards became completely tame and lived among the monks. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, II: 213.

<sup>119</sup> Heron, “The Lioness” (see note 102), 35.

<sup>120</sup> Maier, “Sainthood” (see note 101), 432.

<sup>121</sup> Deyermond points out that the episode of the lion and Gozimás in the *Vida* is abbreviated from that found in its French source. The Spanish poet devotes only 33 verses to this incident while it occupies 81 in the French *Vie* which especially emphasizes the monk’s fear of the lion and the animal’s meekness as he helps to bury Mary’s body. Alan Deyermond “Leones y tigres en la literatura medieval castellana,” *Actas del XI Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval (Universidad de León, 20 al 24 de septiembre de 2005, 2 vols. (León: Universidad de León, 2007), I: 49.*

<sup>122</sup> Cárdenas, “The Desert Experience” (see note 101), 417.

to enter the wilderness<sup>123</sup> and subjected herself to the rigors of desert life in a sincere desire to banish her sinful past. While God performs the miracle of perfecting her soul, the desert is His instrument for her salvation.

On this point, I concur with Delgado who maintains that the desert is the space where Mary is recast from a person of practically no moral or legal worth into a being who enjoys the grace of God and the communion of the saints.<sup>124</sup> The harsh and unrelenting desert is the chosen environment for Mary to be cleansed of her sins and be reborn as saint. She literally is burnt in the fire of the sun, much as base metals are subjected to intense heat, to emerge transfigured and purified. The water imagery in the *VSME* reinforces these ideas of rebirth and cleansing. Mary the Egyptian is at home in the desert because it is there that she finds peace with God and with herself.

In other hagiographic works from Spain the desert or wilderness also figures in the plot but not in such a dramatic fashion as in the *VSME*. For example, in the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*<sup>125</sup> and the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*,<sup>126</sup> penned by Gonzalo de Berceo in the thirteenth century, both Sts. Dominic and Millán escape from society to spend time in the wilderness. In the case St. Dominic, his sojourn in the desert is quite short—one and one half years—whereas St. Millán spends the majority of his adult life wandering in the mountains. By contrast to the wanton early life of Saint Mary as presented in the *VSME*, Sts. Dominic and Millán are portrayed as exemplary models of Christian devotion since childhood.<sup>127</sup> Even as young boys they were virtuous, obedient, hardworking, and pious. Their decision to live in the wilderness does not constitute an act of repentance as was the case for Mary of Egypt. Sts. Dominic, and Millán freely choose to spend time in the wilderness in order to escape from the world's distractions and imitate Christ's suffering through a denial of creature comforts.

When Dominic decided to go into the desert wilderness to live, he was following in the footsteps of a host of ascetics and anchorites who chose to live in isolation and eschew corporal comforts in order to live a contemplative life without worldly distractions.<sup>128</sup> Also, like previous desert hermits, Dominic saw the desert as the place where he would learn to overcome any worldly temptation since his desire was to emulate Jesus's sojourn in the desert where He resisted all the attractive

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<sup>123</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 93.

<sup>124</sup> Delgado, "Ascetas y penitentes" (see note 101), 289.

<sup>125</sup> Hereafter, *VSD*.

<sup>126</sup> Hereafter, *VSMC*.

<sup>127</sup> For Berceo's treatment of Dominic's childhood, see Anthony John Lappin, *The Medieval Cult of Saint Dominic of Silos*, Modern Humanities Research Association Texts and Dissertations, 56 (Leeds, UK: Maney Publishing for Modern Humanities Research Association, 2002), 232.

<sup>128</sup> Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church* (see note 89), 47.

temptations the devil offered Him.<sup>129</sup> Male and female ascetics go into the desert, or other wilderness, to test their resolve and to fortify their defenses against temptation and sin.<sup>130</sup> Dominic fled from the company of others and entered the desert hoping to avoid any circumstance that might lead him into sin.

In the *VSD*, Dominic is portrayed as a perfect child who was chosen especially for service to God because of his great virtue and devotion. Throughout his version of the saint's life, Berceo consistently characterizes him as an exemplary model of piety and faith.<sup>131</sup> After taking his priestly vows, Dominic was concerned that living in the world would cause him to come into contact with sin. He vowed to seek out an isolated place where he could be alone with God: "más me vale buscar logar más apartado, / mejor me será esso que bevir en poblado" (vv. 52cd)<sup>132</sup> (it would be better for me to look for a more remote place / That would be better for me than living with others).<sup>133</sup> Dominic also hoped that by isolating himself and enduring hunger, thirst, heat, and cold he could emulate the lives of the Church fathers he so much admired (vv. 53–54). He specifically names as his role models Sts. John the Baptist, Anthony Abbot,<sup>134</sup> and Paul of Thebes,<sup>135</sup> all of whom spent time alone in the wilderness. Dominic affirms that these men deprived themselves of worldly comforts such as rich food and fine clothing: "visquieron en el yermo, a un desierto estaño / non comiendo pan bueno, nin vistiendo buen paño" (vv. 56cd) (they lived in the wilderness, in a parched desert / not eating good bread, nor wearing fine cloth). The poet then mentions Saint Mary of Egypt and tells the readers that her long suffering in the desert was the source of her salvation: "redimió sus pecados, sufriendo vida dura" (v. 57c) ( she

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<sup>129</sup> Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:12–13, and Luke 4:1–2. Also, the place where Jesus multiplies the loaves and the fishes is described as a desert, indicating that the countryside around cannot supply any food for the multitudes coming to hear Jesus preach (Matthew 15:33). The desert setting makes Christ's miracle even more profound as the abundance of the food is unexpected in a wasteland.

<sup>130</sup> Carlos S. Foresti, "Esquemas descriptivos y tradición en Gonzalo de Berceo (locus amoenus – locus eremus)," *Boletín de filología* (Santiago, Chile) 15 (1963): 5–31; here 18.

<sup>131</sup> On this point, see Robin M. Bower, "Ca falleció el libro: Ascetic Reading and Restorative Hermeneutics in *La vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*," *Hispanic Review* 73.2 (2005): 185–209; here 193.

<sup>132</sup> All quotes from the *VSD* are from the edition, Brian Dutton, et.al., ed. *Gonzalo de Berceo: Obra completa*, Clásicos Castellanos, nueva serie (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1992).

<sup>133</sup> All translations, unless otherwise noted, are from Jeannie K. Bartha, Annette Grant Cash, and Richard Terry Mount, *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 327 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008).

<sup>134</sup> St. Anthony Abbot lived from 251–356 and was one of the founders of monasticism in Egypt (Dutton, et.al., *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 272, fn. 56a.

<sup>135</sup> St. Paul of Thebes died in 347 AD. He was a hermit and friend of St. Anthony (Dutton, et.al., *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 272, fn. 56a.

was saved from her sins by enduring a harsh life). Berceo dedicates another strophe to St. Millán, naming him as another of Dominic's models.<sup>136</sup>

In strophe 59, he also cites St. Felices, Millán's teacher, who had dwelled for some time as a hermit in a cave.<sup>137</sup> Strophe 61 gives the source for Dominic's knowledge of the desert ascetics who had preceded him as the *Vitae Patrum* and claims that these giants of the Church "toda gloria del mundo avién aborrecida" (v. 61c) (had abhorred all the glory of the world). Dominic next recalled Christ's suffering in the desert where he went to fast and pray, and his resistance of the temptations of the devil. He then describes the harsh lives of the Egyptian saints who became hermits (vv. 63abcd). Bower finds the ordering of these strophes to be particularly noteworthy. In a discussion of strophes 61–63, she affirms that "Dominic's meditation positions Christ between Gregory's *Lives of the Saints* and the 'muchas cartas escriptas' ['many written accounts'] on the Egyptian saints, and his resolve follows firmly upon the last reference to the writings that the hermits generate. His readings of the 'Vitas Patrum' and 'cartas' mediate among his own private history, the history of the Church fathers, and salvation history. They allow Dominic to locate himself both diachronically and synchronically in a redeemed universe in which the hinge of meaning is Christ, the Word incarnate."<sup>138</sup>

After citing his saintly predecessors who chose to live in isolation, in strophe 64 Dominic questions why he is living in town where he eats, drinks, and dresses well when he knows that this kind of living will lead to "un astroso fallago" (v. 64d) (ill-fated pleasure). The saint's long speech about his decision to leave the company of others to go into the desert began with strophe 51 and ends with strophe 64 when Berceo resumes the narration. The poet tells us that Dominic decided to abandon his relatives and friends to live in "los yermos, do omnes non moravan" (v. 65d) (the wilderness where no men lived).

Berceo's version of the life of St. Dominic stresses the difficulties and deprivations of the hermitic life.<sup>139</sup> The saint rejoiced when he found himself alone in the desert and without food or drink. He began a strict regimen of devotions and denial of any corporal comfort: "Sufriendo vida dura, iaciendo en mal lecho, / prendié el omne bueno de sus carnes derecho" (vv. 68ab) (Enduring a harsh life, lying on a hard bed, / the good man gained control over the flesh).<sup>140</sup> Even though the poem presents no evidence that Dominic had committed any sins associated

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<sup>136</sup> See vv. 58abcd.

<sup>137</sup> According to Dutton, et.al.(see note 132), St. Felices was a hermit in the Castle of Bilivio (an ancient site near Haro on a elevated bluff above the Ebro river) where he died and was buried at the end of the fifth century. He was venerated in that spot until the year 1090 when his remains were transferred to the monastery of San Millán (272, fn. 59ab).

<sup>138</sup> Bower, "Ca fallestió el libro" (see note 131),198.

<sup>139</sup> Lappin, *The Medieval Cult* (see note 127), 232.

<sup>140</sup> Bartha, *The Collected Works* (see note 133), 231.

with bodily pleasures, in the desert he removed himself from any opportunity or temptation to indulge in them. Furthermore, Dominic's unwavering faith and stoic endurance of his harsh environs greatly annoyed the devil who was unable to tempt him to sin.<sup>141</sup>

Even though Berceo does not specify the geographic location of the desert where Dominic has chosen to live, he describes it in great detail, emphasizing the harsh conditions that the saint endures there. Foresti sees Berceo's description of the desert in the *VSD* as an imitation of the sketchy Biblical depictions of the desert as antithesis of Paradise and dismisses the poet's rendering of the desert environs as mere exercise in Biblical exegesis.<sup>142</sup> Berceo certainly knew the Biblical passages about the desert but his descriptions of the desert are much more elaborate, filled with vivid images of this inhospitable environment. He speaks about the freezing cold, strong winds, persistent mists, and jagged rocks—none of which disturbed Dominic or distracted him from his devotions:

Porque facié mal tiempo, cayé fría elada,  
o facié viento malo oriella destemprada,  
o niebla percodida, o pedrisca irada,  
él todo est lacerio no lo preciava nada (vv. 69abcd).

[Despite bad weather and freezing frost,  
or very cruel and intemperate winds,  
or noxious mist and jagged rocks,  
all these torments were as nothing to him.]

In strophe 71, Berceo claims that he cannot name Dominic's exact location because his Latin source does not name it and the poet speculates that the author either did not know his precise location or the saint may have been constantly on the move.<sup>143</sup> Berceo compares Dominic's experience in the desert to the drought

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<sup>141</sup> Lappin emphasizes that Dominic's life is characterized by his power to keep the devil at bay. Lappin, *The Medieval Cult* (see note 127), 235.

<sup>142</sup> Foresti, "Esquemas descriptivos" (see note 130), 17 and 22. In Deuteronomy 8:2 and Psalms 106:14 we read that the Jews journey in the desert for 40 years but we are given no details about the place and emphasis is on the conduct of the Israelites rather than on the space they inhabit. Other brief descriptions of the desert from the Bible include Isaiah 51:3 where we read that God has the power to transform the desert into paradise: "For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord." And, Ezekiel 19:13 describes the desert as simply "a dry and thirsty land." Numbers 20:5 is a bit more elaborate in its description of the desert, calling it "no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink." Deuteronomy 8:15 adds that the desert is filled with "fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there is no water." The two characteristics one commonly finds in the brief description of the desert in Biblical texts are the dryness and infertility of the land.

<sup>143</sup> Dutton, et.al. confirm that, in Berceo's Latin source, the monk Grimaldus does not name the desert where Dominic is living. *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 276, fn. 71bd.

endured by Elijah as recounted in I Kings 17:1–7. In fact, he calls Dominic Elijah's successor and claims that, despite the great hardships both had endured, "no lo preciava todo quanto tres chirivías" (v. 70d)<sup>144</sup> (all that suffering mattered not in the least). The story of Elijah in I Kings 17 speaks of a drought that lasts two to three years. The Lord instructs Elijah to go into the wilderness east of Jordan. There he drinks from a brook and ravens bring him bread and meat twice daily. Even though Berceo wants to portray Dominic here as a new Elijah, in fact by comparison, Elijah was in a more comfortable position since he had water to drink and food provided by God. There is no mention in the *VSD* of a water source and the poem also claims that the saint had little to eat as in verse 66d which states: "non teníe, bien sepades, pora cena pescado" (rest assured that he had no fish for his supper).

In depicting this extreme environment, Berceo stresses the hardships Dominic willingly endured in the desert as he sought to free himself of any worldly temptation. We find phrases such as "diose a grand lacerio" (v. 67a) (he gave himself to great suffering), "dávalis a las carnes poco de refrigerio" (v. 67d) (he gave his body mighty little rest), "Sufriendo vida dura" (v. 68a) (enduring a harsh life), "Sufrié fiero lacerio las noches e los días" (v. 70a) (he endured cruel suffering day and night), "Todos los sus lacerios, todas las tentaciones" (v. 74a) (All his sufferings and all his temptations), "non dava a sus carnes de folgar nul remedio" (v. 80b) (gave no rest or relief to his body), and "sabet que poco vicio ovo en est comedio" (v. 80d) (be assured, he had little pleasure during this time). Despite the austere conditions that Dominic endures, Berceo gives very little detail about changes in his physical appearance that result from this time in the desert. By contrast, as we have seen in the *VSME*, Mary's features are almost obliterated by her ordeal in the desert. Dominic, unlike St. Mary of Egypt, is not in the desert to redeem himself from past sins and there is no need to describe a change in his appearance as indicator of inner or spiritual change.

Berceo devotes five strophes to a litany of the prayers the saint offered constantly while in the desert. He prayed for God's protection for Christians and for bread, peace, truth, love, charity and good weather for all. He also asked for healing for the sick, freedom for captives and deliverance of Christians from the infidels. An entire strophe is dedicated to the saint's prayers for God to eradicate all heresies. Dominic also prayed for himself, asking God to keep him from erring in any way or breaking his baptismal promises. He also prayed for the dead, saying the *Pater Noster* twice for the repose of their souls.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> This delightful metaphor translates literally as "was not worth as much as three parsnips" which Bartha renders as "all that suffering mattered not in the least." Bartha, *The Collected Works* (see note 133), 231.

<sup>145</sup> On the prayers Dominic offers while in the desert, see Lappin, *The Medieval Cult* (see note 127),

We learn that Dominic stayed in the desert for a year and a half. Berceo gives this specific time frame in two verses of the poem—in verse 73a, “Año y medio sovo en la ermitaña” (He lived as a hermit for a year and a half) and in verse 80c, “visco en esta vida un año e medio” (he lived that life a good year and a half). When Dominic left the desert, he was not choosing to end his life of hardship. Berceo states that Dominic decided to leave his life as a hermit in order to enter a monastery. The monastery is not presented as a refuge from suffering but rather as a place where the saint hoped to live in strict obedience. Berceo makes clear that Dominic’s decision to leave the desert and enter a monastery should not be taken lightly: “No lo tenga ninguno esto a liviandad” (v. 82a) (Let no one consider this a whim). Dominic was warmly received by the monks at San Millán where his devout piety made him a model for his fellow monks.<sup>146</sup>

In the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*, also by Gonzalo de Berceo, the spiritual retreat chosen by St. Millán is a mountainous wilderness. As in his version of the life of St. Dominic, Berceo presents Millán as an exemplary model of obedience and faithfulness. Although both Dominic and Millán are presented as pious and devout even as children, the circumstances of their decisions to live in the wilderness are quite different. Dominic, after years of study and ordination as a priest, decided that he was living too comfortably and needed to remove himself for a while from worldly matters. When he decided to return from the desert it was to live in austerity as a cloistered monk. Millán, on other hand, while still a boy, fell asleep and had a vision of God that inspired him to spend his life as a hermit. Immediately upon awakening he abandoned the flock of sheep he had been tending and went off into the mountains to live in isolation:

Entendió que el mundo era pleno d’engaño,  
 qeríe partirse d’elli e ferse ermitaño;  
 de levar no asmava nin conducho nin paño  
 faziéseli el día más luengo que un año (vv. 12abcd).

[He understood that the world was full of deceit,  
 he wanted to leave it and become a hermit;  
 He did not think of taking food or bread.  
 The day seemed longer than a whole year to him.]<sup>147</sup>

The poem emphasizes that the first thing the newly-minted hermit eschewed was food, a sign of his determination to deny himself even corporal sustenance. But he realized that he could not serve God as a hermit without proper religious

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232. Of special note here are Dominic’s prayers to deliver Christians from the Moors.

<sup>146</sup> Lappin, *The Medieval Cult* (see note 127), 232.

<sup>147</sup> All translations from the *Vida de San Millán* are from Annette Cash’s translation in Bartha, *The Collected Works* (see note 133), 327–79.

instruction. He immediately set out to find St. Felices who he knew was living in Bilivio.<sup>148</sup> On his journey to meet Felices, we are given a kind of preview of the harsh conditions that Millán will endure in the future as a hermit. On his way to Bilivio he passes through Valpierre<sup>149</sup> which is described as “un seqero logar” (v. 14c) (a dry place). When he arrives in Bilivio, he finds Felices praying on a high hill “plus umildosamientre que un monge claustrero” (v. 15d) (more humbly than a cloistered monk). With this statement Berceo intimates that a life of prayer in isolation from others can be spiritually superior even to a life spent in a cloistered monastery.

When Millán found Felices he threw himself at his feet and explained his decision to become an ascetic and his need for religious instruction. He expressed the desire to live in solitude: “Querría esta vida en otra demudar, / e vevir solitario por la alma salvar” (vv. 17ab) (I want to change this life for the other, / to live in solitude, to save my soul). Felices recognized the sincerity of Millán’s request and agreed to instruct him. The boy learned all the Psalms, hymns, and canticles very quickly and was anxious to begin his life of isolation in the wilderness. He left his teacher and went to the valley of Cogolla to begin his life as a hermit. This valley is described as part of a rugged mountain wilderness inhabited by dangerous creatures: “un fiero matarral, / serpientes e culebras avién en él ostal” (vv. 27cd) (It was at this time a thick wildwood; / serpents and snakes made their home there). And the poet describes the caves in the valley of Cogolla as being inhabited by “malas bestias” (v. 28c) (evil beasts). The serpents living in this place are, of course, associated with the devil and a key feature of many of the lives of the anchorites is struggling in the wilderness against demons and temptation.<sup>150</sup> Snakes are also repulsive and dangerous and add to the perception of the area as hostile and treacherous. The wild beasts in the caves reinforce this picture of the harsh wilderness to which Millán retreats.<sup>151</sup>

The description of the wilderness where Millán dwells is even more detailed than the desert described in the *VSD*. We learn that Millán took up residence in the caves and the wild beasts that had inhabited them were so intimidated by his presence that they abandoned the caves. Berceo specifically states that the snakes burrowed deep into their holes to escape living with Millán (v. 31b).<sup>152</sup> On a

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<sup>148</sup> See note 137.

<sup>149</sup> According to Dutton this is a reference to Valpierre, a rocky plain between Haro and San Millán. Dutton, et. al., *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 130, fn. 14c.

<sup>150</sup> Rousseau, *Ascetics* (see 89), 47.

<sup>151</sup> The association of the forest wilderness with dangerous animals is reminiscent of that found in the *Poema de Mio Cid*.

<sup>152</sup> Dutton notes the poem’s description of the snake holes in the rocks matches peculiar geological phenomena found in the rocks of the caves at San Millán de Suso. Dutton, et. al., *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see not 132), 134, fn. 31b.

symbolic level, the snakes digging deep into the earth represent Millán's ability to banish demons and send them back to hell. Alone, in the caves, Millán tormented his flesh, prayed, and chanted the hours daily. His suffering and self-denial brought him great joy: "con todo est' lazerio avié grand alegría" (v. 33d) (He had great joy from all this suffering). But the holy man did not remain alone for long because news of his saintly life reached the people of the Rioja region who began to seek him out. He was greatly annoyed by the many people who came to see him and the poem states that he would have preferred the company of serpents to that of these pilgrims:

Qeríe de mejor grado vevir con las serpientes,  
maguer son enojosas, aven amargos dientes,  
qe derredor las cuevas veer tan grandes yentes,  
ca avié olvidados por esso sos parientes (vv. 45abcd).

[He gladly preferred to live with the serpents,  
although they are bothersome and have bitter teeth,  
than see so many people around the caves,  
since for that reason he had left behind his relatives.]

Not wishing to break his vow to live in isolation, the saint was forced to move from the caves after people learned that he was living there. He moved high up into the mountains where, once again, he must cope with wild animals. We follow him as he wandered in rugged terrain: "Andava por los montes, por los fuertes logares, / por las cuevas enfiestas e por los espinares" (vv. 49ab) (He went through the mountains, through the hard places, / along the steep hills and through the brambles). In the mountains he suffered from the snow and ice of winter, bad storms, weariness, hunger, and heat but he remained steadfast in his desire to remain in the wilderness. The devil tried to tempt Millán time and again but to no avail. Millán climbed to the highest point in Cogolla where he has a cosmic battle with the devil amid violent storms but he remained undaunted. In thanks to God, the saint built a chapel on this high precipice. Because of fear that people would again find him on this mountain peak he moved again, to another mountain. He continued to live in the wilderness for forty years without any human contact, food, or clothing.<sup>153</sup> The poem asserts that all the sites that Millán inhabited were made holy because of his presence:

Benedictos los montes do est' santo andido,  
benedictos los valles do sovo ascondido,

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<sup>153</sup> We are, of course, reminded of the forty years the Israelites wandered in the desert and the forty days of Christ's temptation in the desert (Matthew 4:1–11, Mark 1:12–13, Luke 4:1–13).

benedictos los árboles so los quales estido,  
ca cosa fue angélica de bendición complido (vv. 64abcd).<sup>154</sup>

[Blessed are the mountains where this saint walked.  
Blessed are the valleys where he was hidden.  
Blessed the trees under which he stayed,  
because he was an angelic thing, full of blessing.]

The natural phenomena of mountains, valleys, and trees take on spiritual properties as all are blessed because of having come into contact with the saint.

Millán constantly fled from human contact and retreated to ever more remote parts of the wilderness. His wanderings took him as far as Moncayo, in the mountains between Soria and Zaragoza.<sup>155</sup> At this point in the poem, God decided that Millán's time as a hermit should come to an end so that he may serve as an example of saintly piety for other people. The bishop of Tarazona<sup>156</sup> summoned Millán to come to see him and the obedient saint could not deny the bishop's request even though he was saddened to leave the mountains. We are given details about the saint's appearance after his many years of living in the harsh conditions. He sported a very long beard and his hair was very shaggy: "la barba mucho luenga, la crin mucho crecida" (v. 78b) (his beard very long, his hair shaggy). While this portrait of Millán is not as detailed or gruesome as the description of Mary of Egypt after having spent forty-seven years in the desert, the saint appears as one might expect a hermit to look after forty years living at the mercy of inclement elements.

The bishop of Tarazona told Millán that he could render even greater service to God by taking vows as a priest. The saint obeyed and, after his ordination, requested that he be sent to serve in Berceo. He was a faithful pastor in the church of Saint Eulalia in Berceo but the other priests there were very envious of him. They began to spread vicious rumors about him and Millán bemoaned ever having left the wilderness to live among sinful men. Therefore, secretly at night, he left Berceo to return to the mountains where he had previously dwelt. Millán lived out the rest of his days in the wilderness. He was a true anchorite who spent only brief periods of time in populated areas. Given the many years and harsh conditions Millán endured in the wilderness, his experience comes closer to that of Saint

<sup>154</sup> The structure of this strophe is very similar to the Beatitudes as found in Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–23.

<sup>155</sup> Dutton, et. al., *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 142, fn. 67c. Dutton claims that the inclusion of Moncayo in the *VSMC* may indicate that Berceo knew of the church of San Millán in Verdejo (Aragón), a village that would later claim to be the birthplace of the saint. Dutton, et. al., *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 142, fn. 67c.

<sup>156</sup> Tarazona was a bishopric 85 kilometers northwest of Zaragoza at the point on the borders between Castile, Aragón, and Navarre in the thirteenth century. Dutton, et. al., *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 144, fn. 71a.

Mary of Egypt in the desert than that of St. Dominic who lived a relatively brief time in the wilderness. But the repentant motif of the *VSME* is not part of Millán's experience. This saint decided to live in the wilderness because he wanted to escape mankind in order to be closer to God. By spending his life as a hermit, Millán was not doing penance but rather dedicating himself exclusively to the contemplative life. Berceo's portrayal of the saint's cheerful endurance of the vagaries of a hostile environment adds to the exemplarity of his life.<sup>157</sup>

As we have seen, the desert plays an important role in the *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* and the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*. In the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*, the wilderness of the mountains figures prominently in the plot. All three of these hagiographic works portray harsh natural environments where the saints suffer and endure incredible hardships. The exemplary early lives of Sts. Dominic and Millán stand in contrast to the wayward life of the young Saint Mary of Egypt. In Berceo's hagiographical works, saints lead lives of penance whereas, by contrast, the anonymous poet of the *VSME* recounts the life of a repentant sinner.<sup>158</sup> But all three of these figures decided to escape sin and avoid temptation by living in solitude in wilderness settings. And, in all three of the texts, the saints' experience of the wilderness, the desert or the mountains is essential in the process of their spiritual perfection. These saints are capable of superhuman endurance of hardship and suffering and are recognized as exemplary models of devotion. They emulated the sufferings of Christ and they sacrificed their own corporal needs to commit themselves completely to prayer and contemplation. Ironically, the ascetics in these works become examples of Christian piety and devotion for others only by deserting the company of their fellow man. The desolate and inaccessible realms where they chose to live participated in and contributed to their journeys toward sainthood. The desert and the mountains battered these souls but they emerged from their experience of the wilderness triumphant and holy.

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<sup>157</sup> Foresti, "Esquemas descriptivos" (see note 130), 28.

<sup>158</sup> Enrica J. Ardemagni, "Hagiography in Thirteenth-Century Spain: Intertextual Reworkings," *Romance Languages Annual* 2 (1990): 313–16; here 314.

## Chapter Three

### The Sea: *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*

The sea is perhaps the one feature in the natural world that most dramatically represents nature untamed. In a recent article on ecocriticism and medieval English literature, Eleanor Johnson states unequivocally that “human cultures are permeated by and implicated in the fluid ecosystem of the world’s oceans.”<sup>159</sup> The importance of the sea as a prominent element of the natural world cannot be underestimated. Furthermore, in describing the sea, authors tend to stress its vastness, its power to destroy ships and men, and its unpredictability. Rose, analyzing portrayals of the sea in Anglo-Saxon poetry, states that “the images are not those of a calm sea or a summer voyage but ideas of power, of immeasurable strength, of violence and of cold . . . .”<sup>160</sup>

In Castilian literature the sea usually was portrayed as a place of adventure as well as of danger. And, in a very concrete way, the sea in Castilian texts is seen as a source of power or wealth as we will see in texts that deal with seafaring voyages.<sup>161</sup> The sea was untamed but also potentially attractive; it could be a place of fear or a stimulant for the imagination and, as Rose concludes, “it had a strong hold on the minds of many people in medieval times.”<sup>162</sup> As early as the ninth century, the Irish philosopher Eriugena (ca. 815–ca. 877) had used the sea as a metaphor for divinity, upon which reason sets sail, fearing neither the waves nor winds. Siewers sees Eriugena’s use of sea imagery as “a mutually reciprocal theophany, in which human beings and the natural world participate ‘textually’ in divine energies.”<sup>163</sup> The Jewish poet Judah Halevi (ca. 1075–1141) who grew up

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<sup>159</sup> Eleanor Johnson, “The Poetics of Waste: Medieval English Ecocriticism,” *PMLA* 127.3 (2012): 460–76; here 460.

<sup>160</sup> Rose, *The Medieval Sea* (see note 15), 3.

<sup>161</sup> Rose, *The Medieval Sea* (see note 15), 4.

<sup>162</sup> Rose, *The Medieval Sea* (see note 15), 6.

<sup>163</sup> Siewers, *Strange Beauty* (see note 31), 69.

in Granada speaks of the dangers of the sea and likens the waves to fearsome beasts:

The sails quiver and shake, and beams creak and shudder. The hand of the wind tosses with the waves like reapers at the threshing: now it flattens them out, now it stacks them up. When the waves gather strength they are like lions; when they weaken they are like snakes, who then pursue the lions—like vipers they cannot be charmed.<sup>164</sup>

The sea, literally and metaphorically, demanded a healthy dose of both fear and awe. It was seen as vast and as difficult to understand and navigate as the mysteries of God and his created universe.

As earlier noted scenes of tempests predominate in literary descriptions of the sea and authors particularly focus on the dramatic waters. Rudd draws our attention to the fact that most observations about the sea are made from the perspective of the coasts because “Once out of sight of land we are liable to become conceptually adrift, aware of a vastness which is so big as to be inconceivable.”<sup>165</sup> This view of the sea from the relative safety of shore is contrasted with experiences on and below the surface of the sea with the latter most often portrayed as dangerous, fearsome, and, in moral/theological terms as risky, ill-conceived, and even heretical.

Land is described in contrast to the sea and the oceans’ shorelines are depicted as defining the borders of the known world. The sea was the primary feature in cartography and represents the limitless expanse beyond human knowledge. Many medieval authors had first-hand knowledge of the sea, either directly from voyages or from a coastal vantage point, and all would have come indirectly in contact with the sea due to the importance of the oceans for transporting merchandise and food. The realities of the sea and travel by ship were common, especially in the area of the Mediterranean, and authors relied on their own knowledge as well as literary traditions to depict the sea. Pearsall and Salter, for example, cite descriptions of the sea in the Old English poem, *The Seafarer*, as an early manifestation of this first-hand knowledge of the sea—“the poet’s description of the winter seas is valid in terms of natural reality and personal experience. . . .”<sup>166</sup> But these critics admit that this reality, while undeniable, often is subsumed in typological concerns and is used to reveal spiritual and conceptual truths.<sup>167</sup> These realistic descriptions of the sea combine with and invite allegorical or symbolic interpretations as we shall see in the Spanish medieval texts selected here.

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<sup>164</sup> Quoted in Rose, *The Medieval Sea* (see note 15), 5–6.

<sup>165</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 138.

<sup>166</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 42.

<sup>167</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 42.

The sea plays important roles in several episodes narrated in the *Libro de Alexandre*.<sup>168</sup> In the various *mappae mundi* contained in the Spanish version of the life of Alexander as well as the hero's famous underwater adventure, the sea is the prominent feature. The thirteenth-century Spanish *LA* is a translation, with important adaptations and modifications by an anonymous Castilian poet, of the twelfth-century *Alexandreis* by the French cleric Gautier de Châtillon. Other important sources used by the Spanish poet include the *Historia de preliis Alexandri Magni* (with various reworkings from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries),<sup>169</sup> and the *Roman d'Alexandre* (a French version of the *Historia de preliis* written in the twelfth century). The *Alexandreis* was widely disseminated and studied in many schools and universities and our Spanish poet/translator probably read it as part of his clerical training.<sup>170</sup>

However, even though the *LA* is based primarily on a French source, the Castilian poet did not slavishly follow his model as a number of scholars, including Ian Michael and Juan Casas Rigall, have demonstrated. Michael identifies three major currents of modifications that the Spanish poet made to his models and he classifies these as medievalization, Christianization, and moralization.<sup>171</sup> "Medievalization" refers to the poet's portrayal of education, kingship, knighthood, noble titles, and references to domestic or rural life that reflect thirteenth-century realities rather than accurately reflecting those of the time of Alexander (356–323 B.C.E.). The Spanish poet also Christianizes the life of the hero by excluding most of the pagan elements found in the *Alexandreis* and by introducing the Christian God into key episodes in the *LA*. With respect to moralization, the French source criticizes many of Alexander's actions, but the Spanish version glosses over many of these and concentrates on the hero's sin of pride as the reason for his eventual downfall.

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<sup>168</sup> Hereafter, *LA*.

<sup>169</sup> The *Historia de preliis* was adapted by Alfonso X for the "Estoria de Alexandre" included in the *General Estoria*. Juan Casas Rigall, ed. *Libro de Alexandre*, Nueva Biblioteca de Erudición y Crítica, 28 (Madrid: Castalia, 2007), 13.

<sup>170</sup> The *Alexandreis* was so universally known that Alfonso X called it "el *Alexandre* de las escuelas" (the *Alexandre* of the schools) in Parte IV, Capítulo 30 of the *General Estoria*. Other sources with which the Spanish poet seems to have been familiar include the apocryphal *Epistola Alexandri Macedonis ad Aristotelm* (composed in Latin in the ninth century), the *Ilias Latina* (a translated compendium of the work by Homer prepared in the time of Nero, *Excidium Troiae* (a prose work copied in the ninth century but probably written earlier), St. Isidore's works (*Etimologiae*, *De natura rerum*, *Differentiae*, *Sententiae*), the *Episola Presbiteri Iohannis* for descriptions of the marvels of Asia, the books of the Old Testament, and the apocryphal Gospels. Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 14–15.

<sup>171</sup> Ian Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material in the Libro de Alexandre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970).

By modifying his source in these ways, the Spanish poet presents the life of Alexander in terms that his contemporary audience could easily understand and identify with.<sup>172</sup> The Spanish poet includes most of the geographic locations for Alexander's conquests but he tends to relate most of them to Spain or to Europe.<sup>173</sup> For example Gautier's description of Spain simply mentions the fame of its Columns of Hercules, but the *LA* elaborates on the depiction of Spain and singles out its strong defenses as the country's most outstanding feature<sup>174</sup>:

Desque oviesse África en su poder tornada,  
 entrar a Ëuropa, toda la mar pasada;  
 empear en España, una tierra señada,  
 Tierra de fuertes gentes e bien encastillada (2462abcd).<sup>175</sup>

[and—when he brought Africa under his power—  
 Of coming into Europe, after crossing the seas,  
 and beginning with Spain, an illustrious land,  
 of powerful peoples and well endowed with castles.] (631)<sup>176</sup>

The *LA* also changes Gautier's allusion to the French in the following strophe and adds European countries which do not appear in his source, such as England and Germany.<sup>177</sup>

In describing the sea, the Spanish poet relies on a number of source materials but also introduces details that are original to his version. The sea is the primary component in his three descriptions of the map of the world—the *mappa mundi*. The first map of the world is described in strophes 276–280 and leads into a description of Asia, the area of Alexander's first conquests. The Spanish poet follows the model of the *mappa mundi* found in the *Alexandreis* but adds some details taken from a variety of sources including Isidore of Sevilla's *Etymologiae* and the Bible.<sup>178</sup> His description is in the form of a T within an O map where the O denotes the ocean as a circle surrounding land masses that are divided into three continents. Within the circle, Asia occupies the upper semicircle and Europe and Africa share the lower semicircle. They are separated by bodies of water that make up the T of the map—the Mediterranean is the vertical axis of the T and the

<sup>172</sup> Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 6.

<sup>173</sup> Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material* (see note 171), 179.

<sup>174</sup> Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material* (see note 171), 180.

<sup>175</sup> All citations from the *Libro de Alexandre* are from Juan Casas Rigall's edition, published in 2007 by Castalia. References are to verse numbers (see note 169).

<sup>176</sup> All translations are from Peter Such and Richard Rabone, *Book of Alexander (Libro de Alexandre)*. Aris and Phillips Hispanic Classics (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009). Citations are to page numbers in this volume.

<sup>177</sup> Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material* (see note 171), 180.

<sup>178</sup> Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 203–04.

horizontal axes are the River Tanais<sup>179</sup> and the Lake Meótide.<sup>180</sup> Asia is described as the largest of the divisions with the second and third being Europe and Africa, respectively. The latter are divided by the Mediterranean—“fiende la mar por medio ad ambas igualmente” (278d) (and the sea divides them in equal proportion) (145). Our thirteenth-century Spanish poet comments that the Christians hold only Europe and the other continents are in the hands of the Moors “por nuestra grant dentera” (279d) (to our great sorrow) (145).

Since, in the time of Alexander, inhabited lands were believed to reach only to the Sahara in the South and to Iran in the East, the lands here referred to as Asia and Africa were, in the thirteenth century, in the hands of Muslims. This is a prime example of what Michael calls the Spanish poet’s medievalization and Christianization of his source materials. Another example of this phenomenon occurs in strophe 280 when the Spanish poet likens the form of the bodies of water dividing the continents (the T) to the shape of the cross. This comment is original to the *LA* and includes the explanation that the seas are constructed like the cross to confound unbelievers “on’ devién los incrédulos prender la mala çisma” (280d) (such that unbelievers are thrown into confusion) (147).<sup>181</sup> In the Spanish poem, the sea is depicted as an important boundary between the Christians and Moors and likening the T configuration to the cross of the crucifixion is a prime example of the poet’s Christianization of his sources.

The second *mappa mundi* is included in the section of the poem that deals with Alexander’s construction of a device to carry him aloft so that he may see the world from above and study it—“veer todo’l mundo cómo yaz’o cuál era” (2496d) (to see the form and the nature of all the world) (639). He has a leather sling constructed and attached to two large gryphons.<sup>182</sup> He sews himself into the sling with a hole through which he can survey the world below him as the gryphons fly into the air. The Spanish poet claims that Alexander withholds food from the birds for several days and, when he wants to fly in his sling, he dangles a piece of meat on a long pole in front of them. The birds fly after the meat but Alexander keeps the food just out of reach, controlling the gryphons’ ascent and descent in this manner. There are several theories as to the sources for this section of the *LA* but

<sup>179</sup> In Greece, traditionally referred to as the border between Europe and Asia.

<sup>180</sup> Lake Meótide is a reference to the Sea of Azov in Eastern Europe. It is linked by a narrow strait to the Black Sea and is bounded by Ukraine in the north, Russia on the east, and on the west by the Crimean Peninsula. Some maps also include the Black Sea, the Bosphorus, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Nile Rivers as the axes. Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 204.

<sup>181</sup> Casas Rigall notes that this verse is ambiguous. “La mala çisma” can refer in general terms to the incredulous Moors mentioned in the previous strophe or to the Schism of 1054 or even to the Jews as instigators of the crucifixion of Christ. Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 205–06.

<sup>182</sup> Gryphons were creatures of legend that had the wings and head of an eagle but the body of a lion. Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 728.

none is conclusive and the Spanish poet seems to draw on a number of different elements for this description of the world as surveyed by Alexander.<sup>183</sup> The king sees mountains, valleys, and rivers that flow into the seas, but he is unable to determine the limits of the oceans:

Tanto pudo el rëy a las nuves pujar:  
veyé montes e valles de yus' de sí estar;  
veyé entrar los ríos odos en alta mar,  
mas cómo yazié o non nunca lo pudo asmar (2504abcd)

[The King was able to soar so high into the clouds  
that he saw mountains and valleys lie below him;  
he saw the rivers all flow out into the high seas,  
but their extent he could never imagine] (641).

This inability ever to know the vastness of the seas had been alluded to earlier in the poem. In strophe 2458, the poet states that Alexander sailed all the seas but had found no end to them: *avié en es' comedio todo el mar buscado; cabo non le fallava; érase ya tornado*" (2458bc) (in the meantime, he had searched the whole sea. He had found no end and had now turned for home) (631).

In Strophe 2505, during his flight aloft, Alexander sees shorelines and ports and the poet comments on the dangers and rewards of sea voyages:

Veyé en cuáles puertos son angostos los mares;  
veyé grandes peligros e muchos de lugares;  
veyé muchas galeas dar en lso peñiscales;  
otras sallir a puerto, adobar de yantares (2505abcd)

[He saw in which harbours were the sea's waters narrow;  
he saw great dangers which lay in many places;  
he saw many galleys be wrecked on the rocks  
and others come to port and make ready for the feast] (641).

The main contribution of the Spanish poet in this section describing Alexander's flight is his anthropomorphic description of the world. Since he admits that it will be impossible to relate all the phenomena Alexander sees during his flight, he opts to describe the world in figurative terms. The *mappa mundi* he presents is based on the idea of the body of man as a microcosm, reflecting the macrocosm of the world. This concept was widely disseminated in the Middle Ages and Such and Rabone specifically cite St. Isidore's *De natura rerum* where man is described as containing the world in miniature as an example.<sup>184</sup> Our poet begins by calling the

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<sup>183</sup> The *Pseudo Calistenes* as well as the *Historia de preliis* have been cited as sources, Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 683. Such and Rabone comment on the use of the gryphons that are also found in the *Roman d'Alexandre. The Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 728.

<sup>184</sup> Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 728. Casas Rigall also cites Gregory's

world an image of man—“es llamado mundo el omne por figura” (2508b) (that the world is known as image of Man) (641). He cites the largest continent, Asia, as equivalent to the body with the sun and moon as the eyes. He calls to mind the T within O figure of the world used in the first *mappa mundi* and likens human arms to the cross on which Christ was crucified.<sup>185</sup> The left leg is equated with Africa. Again, the Spanish poet cannot resist making a derogatory comment about the Moors when he mentions Africa: “Toda la mandan moros, un pueblo renegado, que oran a Mafo met, un traedor provado” (2510bc) (it is all ruled by Moors, a renegade people, who pray to Mahomet, a proven traitor) (641). In contrast, the right leg of man, symbolizes Europe which is the most Catholic of all the continents and blessed by the Pope:

Es por la pierna diestra Ëuropa notada.  
 Ésta es más católica, de la fe más poblada;  
 ésta es de la diestra del Obispo santiguada:  
 tienen Petrus e Paulus en ella su posada” (2511abcd)

[It is Europe that is depicted by the right leg:  
 this is the most Catholic, most peopled with believers,  
 and it is blessed by the right hand of the Bishop:  
 there it is that Peter and Paul have their dwellings] (641).

The land masses are described as the flesh of man which is “espessa e pesada” (2512a) (thick and heavy) (643). The sea is the skin that encloses the flesh—“el mar es el pellejo que la tiene çercada” (2512b) (the sea is the skin by which it [flesh] is enclosed) (643). Just as the largest organ of the body is the skin, so the widest expanse of the world is the sea. Although the poet speaks of the fact that we can never know the full extent of the seas, within the scheme of this *mappa mundi*, the oceans contain the land masses and define them and establish their boundaries.

The analogy of the body as microcosm of the world continues and the poet equates the veins that carry blood to the rivers, the bones to the rocks, and the hair on the head to the grasses of the fields. Casas Rigall notes that all these correspondences form part of both the Christian and pagan traditions and he speculates that our poet probably did not rely on any one source but rather

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commentaries on the Evangelists and St. Paul’s epistle to the Romans as well as the writings of St. Augustine as sources for the anthropomorphic *mappa mundi*. Such and Rabone also note that the concept appears in some Jewish writings and cite as an example, the *Olam Katan* written by Joseph ben Jacob ibn Tzaddik (? – 1149), a Spanish rabbi from Córdoba who had worked with the father of Maimonides. *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 176), 728.

<sup>185</sup> Simone Pinet, “‘Será todo en cabo a un lugar’: catrografías del *Libro de Alexandre*,” *Actes del X Congrès Internacional de L’Associació Hispànica de Literatura Medieval*, ed. Rafael Alemany, et al. *Symposia Philologica*, 12, 3 vols. (Alacant: Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, 2005), III: 1321–34; here 1329.

composed his analogies from memory of various compendia he had read.<sup>186</sup> The Spanish poet includes wild beasts in this description of the world and states that they exist as punishment for human sins—“por majamiento de los nuestros pecados” (2513d) (and these serve as punishment for our sins) (643)—thus putting a Christian spin on the common association of wild animals with wilderness. Alexander continues his aerial survey of the land until he has satisfied his curiosity.

A final *mappa mundi* is found as part of an ekphrastic description of the third panel of Alexander’s tent. The poet says that the map maker was very skilled and represented the world “como si la oviesse con sus pies andada” (2576d) (as if he had walked upon it with his own feet) (657). Some scholars have speculated that the locales mentioned in this *mappa mundi* depict a medieval cleric’s itinerary or that they were places the poet knew from his own journeys.<sup>187</sup> Most notable in this description of the world is the contrasting view of the land and the sea. Strophe 2577 describes the world with the land masses in the center and the sea surrounding it. Compared to the vastness of the sea, the land appears insignificant (2577b). And the land is largely unpopulated with wide expanses of pasture and plowed lands (2577cd). Nonetheless, the poet includes details about the three continents since the purpose of the map is to show Alexander the lands he has conquered and those that remain outside his control.

Alexandre en ella lo podié perçebir  
 cuánto avié conquisto, cuánto por conquerir:  
 non se le podié tierra alçar nin encobrir  
 que él non la sopiesse buscar e combatir” (2587abcd)

[On his tent, Alexander could have sight of it all:  
 all that he had conquered and all he might still.  
 No land could rise against him or hide itself away  
 so that he could not find it and engage it in war] (659).

Asia again appears as the greater of the land masses with Europe and Africa being described as her “anadas” (2578d) (step-daughters). But our poet, for this *mappa mundi*, confines his detailed description to the lands of Europe, particularly places that would have been well-known, especially to a clerical audience. The poet comments that the mapmaker has included all the important cities, castles, rivers, hills, empires, and countries in his drawing (strophe 2579). For Spain, he specifically cites the depiction of the rivers Tajo, Duero, and Ebro and mountains

<sup>186</sup> Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 687–88.

<sup>187</sup> Casas Rigall and Michael cite Willis and Such and Rabone on this point. Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176) and Raymond S. Willis, *The Debt of the Spanish Libro de Alexandre to the French Roman d'Alexandre*. Elliot Monographs, 33 (1935; New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1965).

in the Peninsula such as Cogolla and Moncayo. Such and Rabone point out that the former is not a prominent mountain and assert that it is probably included because it is found in the region that the poet knew or that it was well-known because of its association with the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla.<sup>188</sup> This map also shows the cities of Burgos, Pamplona, Soria, Toledo, León, and Lisbon. The first two were familiar to the poet's audience as important stops along the French pilgrimage road to Santiago and the other four were cities known for their cathedral schools.<sup>189</sup> In France, the map depicts Gascony with the River Garonne running through it and Bordeaux. Paris occupies a prominent spot and the poet calls the city a center of great learning.<sup>190</sup> Tours<sup>191</sup> on the River Loire and the River Rhône also appear on the map. In Italy, the map includes Pavia and Milan in Lombardy and Bologna, renowned for the study of law in its university.<sup>192</sup> The next city mentioned is Rome and the poem alludes to the story of the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus. At this point the poet interrupts his detailed description of the world map saying that to mention all the lands on the map he would have to write another book. He claims that he is tired and directs the readers' attention to other sections of his poem where they can find descriptions of Asia.<sup>193</sup> Since the purpose of the map was to remind Alexander of all the lands he has won and to show him what remains to be conquered, it is a visual reminder for the reader of the king's unbridled ambitions and his desire to rule the entire world. Pinet sees the inclusion of the *mappa mundi* as part of the description of Alexander's tent as a clue to the poem's insistence on the hero's sin of pride. Since cartographic practices, with which the poet would have been familiar, used world maps as part of the iconographic representation of the Final Judgment, their presence in the *LA* contributes to our appreciation of the harsh judgment ultimately imposed on Alexander.<sup>194</sup>

Another section of the *LA* in which the sea is an essential element for our understanding of Alexander's eventual downfall is the description of his underwater adventure. In this part of the poem, Nature appears as an allegorical figure and becomes angry with Alexander when he tries to learn the secrets of the underwater world. Significantly, this important section is preceded by an enumeration of Alexander's many conquests which include India and Asia. It also

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<sup>188</sup> Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 730.

<sup>189</sup> Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 704.

<sup>190</sup> For the importance of the University of Paris see, Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 731.

<sup>191</sup> Site of another important cathedral school. Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 704.

<sup>192</sup> Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 731.

<sup>193</sup> He is alluding to strophes 281–294, the first *mappa mundi* in the *LA* where Asia is described.

<sup>194</sup> Pinet, "Será todo en cabo a un lugar" (see note 185), 1330.

follows the near-fatal wounding of Alexander in the battle for Sudracae.<sup>195</sup> When the king's troops learn that their leader will recover from his wounds, they are described as happy as sailors who safely reach port:

Quando vieron que era el rey ya mejorado,  
el planto y el duelo fue en gozo tornado:  
jel que anda en mar perdido e lazado  
non seríe más alegre, quando fues'arribado! (2263abcd)

[When they saw that the King had recovered  
the weeping and grief turned to joy;  
the man who sails the seas, lost and wretched,  
would be no happier on reaching land] (587).

The king, although not fully recovered, is eager to return to action and proposes to cross the ocean and reach the far shore where no one before him has sailed. The poet intervenes in the events to remind us again of Alexander's great audacity and the extent of his ambitions:

Saber el Sol dó naçe e Nilo de dó mana,  
el mar qué fuerça trae quando fier' trasmontana,  
maguer avié grant seso, acuçia sobejana,  
semejaba en esto una grant valitana (2270abcd)

[and to learn where the sun rises and whence the Nile springs  
and what force the sea has when whipped up by the wind;  
although of great intelligence and exceptionally astute,  
in these plans he seemed a man of great presumption] (589).

But the king's will prevails and Alexander and his troops set sail on the ocean with calm seas and winds in their back:

Entraron por las naves: pensaron de andar.  
El mar era pagado, non podié mejorar;  
los vientos non podién más derechos estar.  
Ivan e non sabién escontra quál lugar (2297abcd)

[They embarked on the ships and began to sail.  
The sea was calm—it could have been no better.  
The winds could not have been more at their backs;  
they sailed, but knew not their destination] (595).

There is no need to use the oars and the sails fill readily. They soon find themselves on the high seas and the sailors have trouble navigating these uncharted waters. The winds abruptly change and Alexander and his men are

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<sup>195</sup> A city in central Punjab on the River Ravi. Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 722.

plunged into the midst of a storm. Alexander is unable to calm the frightened sailors but the king has no desire to return to port and voyages onward. At this point the poet comments on Alexander's persistence and bravery when faced with dangers. Even the clouds and the wind envy his courage: "Passó muchas tempestas con su mala porfidia, que las nuves avién, e los vientos, envidia" (2303ab). (He endured many storms through his rash insistence for he was envied by the clouds and the winds) (595). The poet emphasizes in this and other passages Alexander's sense of determination and this comparison to the forces of nature underscores the idea of the hero's obstinance in the face of danger.

The sea voyage appears in our poet's primary source, the *Alexandreis*, but for the submarine voyage to follow, the Spanish poet relied on other sources, principally, the *Historia de preliis* and the *Roman d'Alexandre*.<sup>196</sup> The poet of the *LA* wanted a total sense of the conquest of the seas and used additional sources to compose the section about Alexander's underwater excursion.<sup>197</sup> It is noteworthy that the poet said he did not find the tale of Alexander's submarine adventure in a written source but that it is "Una fazaña suelen las gentes retraer" (2305a) (A great exploit that people often tell) (597). Casas Rigall believes that this comment means that the poet did not find the material for the underwater voyage in the *Alexandreis* and that he narrates these verses from memory since he does not faithfully follow any of the identifiable sources for this tale.<sup>198</sup> The poet admits that the story is not written down and that it is hard to believe: "non yaze en escripto: es malo de creer" (2305b) (it lies not in writing and is hard to believe) (597).

Alexander has a glass vessel constructed—"arca de vidrio" (2306c)—and descends into the depths of the ocean with two trusted men. The king plans to stay in the submarine for fifteen days so that he may learn the secrets of the sea and write them down (strophe 2309). The poet makes a very poignant comment about the hierarchies among the sea creatures that Alexander is observing:

Non vive en el mundo ninguna criatura  
que non cría el mar semejante figura.

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<sup>196</sup> Willis, *The Debt* (see note 187), 38–39. Alexander's participation in the sea voyage is pure invention since, as Such and Rabone point out, the historic Alexander did not take part in the expedition by sea described in this section of the *LA*. He ordered ships built at Nicea and Bucephala with the intention of sailing down the Jhelum and Indus Rivers to the Indian Ocean and then on to the Persian Gulf but the king himself marched by land. Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander* (see note 176), 724.

<sup>197</sup> Jorge García López, "La alegoría de la naturaleza en el 'Libro de Alexandre'," *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval*. Santander, 22–26 de septiembre de 1999. Palacio de la Magdalena, Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, ed. Margarita Freixas, et.al., 2 vols. (Santander: Consejería de Cultura del Gobierno de Cantabria, Año Jubilar Lebaniego, Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval, 2000), I: 797–807; here 798.

<sup>198</sup> Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 642.

Traen enemistades entre sí por natura:  
los fuertes a los flacos danles malaventura (2312abcd).

[There is no living thing that exists in the world  
that the sea does not create to resemble;  
there are hostilities among them by nature  
and the strong bring ill fortune to the weak] (597).

The king observes how some of the creatures deceive and capture others and likens their actions to the lies and snares of the world of men. The fish cluster about the king's submerged vessel and bow their heads to him in submission. Alexander is greatly pleased with this underwater kingdom and claims it as yet another of his conquests: "¡contava que avié grant imperio ganado!" (2315d) ([he] considered that he had won a great empire) (599). When the king observes how the large fish eat the smaller ones, he begins to wax eloquently about the sin of pride that exists in every place on earth and in the sea. He asserts that pride is not just a sin among men, but that it is a vice also exhibited by birds, beasts, and fish:

Las aves e las bestias, los omnes, los pescados,  
todos son entre sí a bandos derramados.  
¡De vicio de soberbia son todos entecados!:  
¡los flacos de los fuertes andan desafiados! (2320abcd)

[The birds and the beasts, the men, the fish,  
are all divided into bands among themselves.  
They are all afflicted with vice and with pride  
and the weak are oppressed by the strong] (599).

Although Alexander passes judgment on all of creation for the sin of pride, he does not see this fault in himself.<sup>199</sup> The Spanish poet comments on this huge oversight on Alexander's part in strophe 2321 and calls his words exaggerated and conceited.

The poet then abruptly cuts off the narration of Alexander's story to include a digression on the king's pride. A number of critics have pointed out that Alexander's desire to conquer the sea is a manifestation of the sin of hubris that will eventually lead to his downfall.<sup>200</sup> Michael contends that, even though the

<sup>199</sup> On this point Casas Rigall asserts: "permite al poeta destacar la ceguera del protagonista, quien ve la paja en ojo ajeno" (it lets the poet highlight the blindness of the protagonist, who sees the speck in another's eye and not the plank in his own; see note 197). See also García López, "La alegoría" (see note 197), 798.

<sup>200</sup> See Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), Michael, (see note 171) García López (see note 197), Juan Manuel Cacho Bleca, "El saber y el dominio de la Naturaleza en el *Libro de Alexandre*," *Actas del III Congreso de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval* (Salamanca, 3 al 6 de octubre de 1989), ed. María Isabel Toro Pascua (Salamanca: Biblioteca Española e Hispanoamericana, 1994), 197–207.

underwater adventure is the most fantastic event recounted in the poem, "it is artistically vital for the denouement of the narrative, since it contains the crisis in Alexander's moral development."<sup>201</sup> In this section of the *LA* the poet presents an elaborate allegory in which Nature is offended by Alexander's desire to understand all the mysteries of the natural world. Although the allegory of Nature is found in Gautier's *Alexandreis*, the personification of Nature has a long literary tradition<sup>202</sup> and the Castilian poet departs from his immediate model in several key aspects.

In Gautier's version, Nature is alarmed because Alexander dares to take up force of arms to learn her secrets, but the *LA* introduces the sin of pride into the discussion and compares Alexander's sin to that of Lucifer: "¡nunca mayor sobervia comidió Lucifer!" (2327d) (Lucifer himself never conceived of greater pride) (601). The Spanish poet also introduces God into the allegory of Nature as the Creator who, along with Nature, is outraged that Alexander does not recognize the sin of pride in himself that he so roundly condemns in others.<sup>203</sup> God is offended by Alexander, not for being so ambitious in conquering other territories, but, because he wanted to understand the mysteries of the created order that were forbidden to him.<sup>204</sup> When Alexander condemns all of creation, he is not following God's dictate to observe the natural world in order to praise God for the wonders of creation. The king excludes himself from his observations about the world and, by so doing, excludes himself from the created order. He acts as if he were God when he presumes to pronounce judgment on all creation.<sup>205</sup> The poet explains that God granted Alexander the power to conquer all lands and peoples but that the king oversteps the bounds of human endeavor when he seeks to understand the depths of the sea. Nature is overjoyed that God concurs in her wrath against Alexander.

The introduction of God into the allegory is original with the Spanish poet and reflects his concept of Nature in the ontological structure of the world.<sup>206</sup> In the worldview of our poet, God is the creator who delegates to Nature the care of the

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<sup>201</sup> Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material* (see note 171), 255.

<sup>202</sup> See Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 646.

<sup>203</sup> On the intervention of God in the condemnation of Alexander, completely original to the Spanish version, see Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material* (see note 171), 153; Carlos García Gaul, "Viajes imaginarios submarinos," *Actas del IX Simposio de la Sociedad Española de literatura general y comparada, Zaragoza 18–21 de noviembre de 1992* ed. Túa Blesa, et.al., 2 vols. (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, Banco Zaragozano, 1994), II, 389–94; here 392–93; Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 647 and 799–800.

<sup>204</sup> García Gaul, "Viajes imaginarios" (see note 203), 393.

<sup>205</sup> García López, "La alegoría" (see note 197), 799. García López defines Alexander's pride as far surpassing the sin of hubris. He attributes the Castilian poet's attitude toward Alexander to the Chartres school conception of *Natura naturans*. "La alegoría" (see note 197), 806–07.

<sup>206</sup> García López, "La alegoría" (see note 197), 800.

world and she does not act without God's consent and approval. In the *Alexandreis*, Nature appears acting alone and we find a number of features in our poet's immediate source missing from the allegorical description of her in the *LA*. Gautier describes Nature's relationship with the elements and treats her as a divinity who all creatures adore.<sup>207</sup>

In the Castilian version, Nature does not come down from the clouds where she dwells until God also expresses his anger at Alexander. She descends into hell to ask the devil for help in destroying the King since she knows that no man will be able to subdue him. The Spanish poet gives a very long description of hell (strophes 2339–2424) that contains allegories of the seven deadly sins, various *exempla*, and gruesome portrayals of souls of the damned burning in a fiery furnace. Although hell also is described in the *Alexandreis*, the Castilian poet amplifies this portion of his work, relying on common Christian motifs rather than on any other text in particular.<sup>208</sup>

Nature explains to Satan that Alexander poses a threat to “nuestro reino” (2429d) (our kingdom). This phrase might seem odd but the poet had earlier reminded his readers that God has created everything—the earth, heaven, and hell. Before beginning the long, detailed description of hell, the poet inserts the following strophe:

El Criador, que fizo todas las criaturas  
con diversos donaires e diversas figuras,  
ordenó los lugares de diversas naturas,  
do reçiben las almas lazerios e folguras (2335abcd)

[The Creator, who made every creature  
with differing graces and differing forms,  
did ordain places of differing kinds  
where souls receive suffering or pleasures] (603).

Nature recounts the lands that Alexander has conquered and asserts that no one dares to oppose him. Even beasts and snakes recoil from his presence—“non lo pueden las bestias nin las sierpes durar” (2431b) (nor can beasts or snakes endure against him) (625). But, according to Nature, Alexander has gone too far by prying into the secrets of the sea and warns the Devil that the king also wants to learn the secrets of hell. She tells Satan: “¡todos los mis secretos quier' despaladinar!; ¡a mí e a vós todos en cadenas levar!” (2433 cd)(he desires to lay open all my secrets and to carry off the two of us in chains) (625).

Nature claims to have given hell to the Devil as a dwelling place once he was exiled from heaven. The poet is careful not to say that Nature created hell, but

<sup>207</sup> García López, “La alegoría” (see note 197), 804.

<sup>208</sup> Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 648.

rather, in her role as caretaker of God's creation, she assigned this place to him. As part of her rhetoric when trying to convince the Devil to come to her aid against Alexander, she none too subtly reminds him that he owes his very home to her. God puts in motion the alliance between Nature and Satan that will be necessary to overcome the superhuman force of Alexander.<sup>209</sup> When the Devil agrees to help her, Nature claps her hands for joy. The poet then reminds us that, even in a place where Nature usually does not dare to tread—in hell—her laws must be obeyed. Satan calls together a council of hell and advises them of the danger Alexander poses to their existence. The allegorical figure of Treachery steps up, vowing to brew a potion that will kill the King almost instantly. She makes a pact with one of Alexander's men, Count Antipater, to put the poison in Alexander's food. Nature does not appear again in the poem as she has completed her mission to bring about Alexander's destruction.

The allegorical depiction of Nature and the underwater world as her private domain add to the significance of the sea as described in the three *mappae mundi* found in the *LA*. The sea is the largest and most significant feature of these maps. It divides not only the continents but also Christians from Moors. The seas assume the form of the cross and, in the anthropomorphic model, it is the skin that encloses the flesh of man. The view of the sea as the largest body, both in the macrocosm of the world and the microcosm of man, attests to its unequalled role as the most important element in the created universe. The respect for the sea, its vastness and its fundamental role in dividing the earth, is undermined by Alexander when he tries to know the forbidden world under the surface of the sea. Nature herself, in consort with God, conspires to punish Alexander precisely because he invaded the realm of the oceans. God granted the king powers to conquer all lands and peoples, but his pride caused him to want to dominate even the depths of the sea. The idea that the sea contains mysteries man is not allowed to know is synonymous with our poet's view of the immense power of the seas, the untamed realm of nature that man cannot control and can never fully understand.

Another perspective on the sea is featured in Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa María*. (1257–1283).<sup>210</sup> While the Alfonsine collection also emphasizes the awesome power of the sea, Holy Mary appears time and again in this collection of Marian miracles as tamer of the sea or as benevolent guardian of her devotees on hazardous sea voyages. The allegorical figure of Nature in the *LA* protected the sea and its depths as her private domain and, in the *CSM*, the Virgin Mary shows herself master of

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<sup>209</sup> García López, "La alegoría" (see note 197), 804–05. García López labels this alliance as "universal," implying that all the forces of heaven, earth, and hell are necessary to subdue Alexander. "La alegoría" (see note 197), 805.

<sup>210</sup> Hereafter, *CSM*.

the seas where she can cause mighty storms or calm the roughest water. Some twenty of the *cantigas* in the 427 songs in this collection, or almost five per cent, are set at sea. Mary was associated in the popular imagination with the protection of sailors and her power to guide and bring ships safely to port was a belief shared by the compilers of the CSM. The poets of the *cantigas* paint vivid descriptions of the sea as an untamed and potentially dangerous domain for man.

A good example of the power of Holy Mary to control the sea is found in the refrain to CSM 33:

Gran poder á de mandar  
o mar e todo-los ventos  
a Madre daquel que fez  
todos-los quatr' elementos. (vv. 3–6)

[The Mother of Him Who created all the four elements has great power to command the Sea and the winds] (44).<sup>211</sup>

Whereas God controls the four elements of which the earth is composed, Mary, as Mother of Christ, has the power to calm the winds and command the oceans. In CSM 33, a group of pilgrims on their way to Acre are caught in a storm and their boat begins to sink. Among those who try to escape the sinking ship is a Bishop but, when he tries to board the lifeboat, he falls into the sea. Despite the storm he does not drown because he commends himself to Holy Mary. The pilgrims are amazed that he has survived and he attributes his rescue to the Virgin. The violent sea is a prominent feature in four of the six miniatures accompanying this text which show the ship riding high waves and, later, the small life boat being tossed about on the waves (Fig. 1).

In *Cantiga 36*, the refrain again reminds the readers of Mary's power to calm storms: "Muit' amar devemos en nossas voontades / a Sennor, que coitas nos toll' e tempestades" (vv. 3–4) (We should all love with all our will the Lady who frees us from troubles and storms) (49). In this miracle tale, merchants on a ship off the coast of Brittany are caught in a great storm and all fear for their lives. They begin to call on all the saints to help them, but the wind and waves continue to rail against their ship. A man described as a saintly abbot is aboard the vessel and he tells the other passengers that they should direct their prayers to the Virgin who, alone, has the power to rescue them from the storm. When the men call on Holy Mary, they see a light appear atop the boat's mast — "que alum ava mui mais que

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<sup>211</sup> All quotes from the CSM are from the 3 volume edition of Walter Mettmann, *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Clásicos Castalia, 134, 172, 178 (Madrid: Castalia, 1984–1989). All translations of the CSM are from Kathleen Kulp-Hill's *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise: A Translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 173 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000). References are to verse numbers for the Mettmann edition and page numbers in the Kulp-Hill translation.

outras craridades" (v. 33) (which shone brighter than any other lights) (49). The sea becomes calm and the bright light on the mast guides them safely to port. The stormy sea is a feature in five of the six miniatures accompanying this miracle story (Fig. 2).

Just as the *LA* features Alexander's expedition into the depths of the sea, an underwater adventure of sorts also appears in the *CSM*. The setting for *CSM* 86 is the Church of St. Michael off the Brittany coast. The only time that one can walk to the church is at low tide. The poem accurately and realistically presents this unique feature:

non podia om' alá ir, se non  
 menguass' ant' o mar, ca en outra sazón  
 non podia ren en sayr nen entrar. (vv. 26–28)

[no one could go there until the tide went out, for at other times  
 nothing could leave nor enter there] (111).

A pregnant woman goes to St. Michael's to pray but, because of her condition, she cannot walk fast enough to avoid being caught midway as the tide comes in. She fears that she will drown when she begins to feel labor pains while she is trapped by the waters. She cries out to Holy Mary who comes to her aid. Below the waves, the Virgin creates a protective bubble for the woman formed by the sleeves of her celestial robes. In this safe space below the sea's surface, she helps to deliver safely the child. As soon as the tide goes out the woman takes her newborn child to St. Michael and relates the miracle of her underwater delivery. The sea and the coastline appear in all six miniatures that illustrate this miracle (Fig. 3). The third shows the desperate woman trapped by the sea with only her head and arms above the water. The fourth depicts the protective bubble under the sea where the Virgin helps the woman to give birth.

Unlike Alexander who constructed a special vessel to explore the depths of the sea, the woman in *CSM* 86 finds herself accidentally beneath the surface of the sea. She does not drown because the Virgin provides a safety shield around her. The significant contrast in these two underwater adventures is that Alexander's submarine-like device is man-made, an effort to defy the natural elements and survive for extended periods underwater, whereas, in the *cantiga* narrative, the protective bubble is a divine mechanism, a gift of grace granted because of prayer and faith in the power of Holy Mary. The latter is praised as a miraculous manifestation, whereas, Alexander's time underwater is portrayed as a sin against God and Nature. His pride leads him to invade the realms forbidden to human knowledge but Mary's domain has no such limitations. The pregnant woman finds herself accidentally under the sea surface and her time there is blessed by the Virgin's presence and the safe delivery of her child.

In CSM 172 we find contrasting descriptions between a stormy ocean and a calm one. In this *cantiga* a merchant on his way to Acre is caught in a violent storm at sea. The winds are so strong that “o masto foi britado / e a va toda rota” (vv.10–11) (the mast was broken and sail torn to shreds) (207). He calls on Holy Mary to save him and his ship and promises to go on a pilgrimage to Our Lady’s shrine in Salas should he survive the storm. The Virgin quiets the storm and the winds turn calm and favorable — “ouveron tan bon vento, que na mannãa chegaron / a Acr” (vv. 22–23) (They had such a good wind that they arrived at Acre in the morning) (207). The merchant sells his goods in Acre and buys a crystal cross which he takes to the Virgin’s shrine in Salas as thanksgiving for her intervention at sea. The first illustration for this tale shows the stormy sea in contrast to the second drawing where the sea is shown as placid and calm after the merchant prays to the Virgin (Fig. 4).

A very vivid depiction of a stormy sea is found in CSM 267.<sup>212</sup> A merchant from Portugal is traveling by sea to Flanders to sell his wares when a violent storm arises:

levantou-s’ o mar con tormenta tamanna  
que muito per foi aquel dia irado  
....  
Levantou sas ondas fortes feramente  
sobre’ aquela nave, que aquela gente  
cuidou y morrer. . . . (vv. 37–38 and 40–42)

[the sea rose that day with a great storm and became very rough.  
It struck the ship so fiercely with powerful waves that those people  
thought they would surely die there] (324).

Suddenly a wave, described as “fort’ e mui grave” (v. 47) (heavy, powerful) (324), sweeps the merchant overboard where devils conspire to drown him. He remembers the graces the Virgin had granted him in the past and calls on her to save him. She brings him safely to shore and miraculously calms the storm — “ca tornos o mar mansso . . .” (v. 81) (the sea became as calm as it was before) (325). Within ten days he rejoins his ship that had arrived safely to its port after Holy Mary calmed the winds. His shipmates are delighted and amazed to see him alive. In thanksgiving for his rescue, the merchant immediately goes to pay homage to the Virgin of Rocamadour in France. The stormy sea in this *cantiga* is associated with the devils who try to kill the devout merchant when he is swept overboard, whereas, the calm sea denotes the Virgin’s greater power for she can control the forces of nature and save a man who otherwise would have been lost. The

<sup>212</sup> CSM 267 repeats in the ms. Escorial T.I.1 (Códice Rico) as CSM 373. It also appears in the Florence ms. as CSM 53.

unfinished miniatures for this *cantiga* appear on folio 71r of the Florence manuscript of the CSM. Despite being incomplete, the stormy sea is clearly depicted in the second and third panels while the fourth shows the calm sea and the Virgin's rescue of the faithful merchant (Fig. 5).

One of the most detailed and frightening depictions of violent seas is found in CSM 313. In this *cantiga* a storm rages at night, ravishing a ship and killing many on board:

a nav' era ja quebrada. Des i o mar a crecer

....

Començou tan feramente e engrossar cada vez,

e volvendo-s' as ar as; des i a noite sse fez,

cona tormenta mui forte, negra ben come o pez,

demais viian da nave muitos a ollo morrer. (v. 24 and vv. 26–29)

[the ship was already broken. Then the sea began to rise rapidly and swell more and more, churning up the sand, and the night became very dark because of the storm, black as pitch. Furthermore, they saw many people on the ship dying all around them] (379).

The simile of the night, black as pitch, is a common one in the CSM and is associated with danger or the potential for danger. This *cantiga* appears as no. 16 in the Florence codex with six miniatures on folio 18r depicting the miracle. The stormy sea is the key feature of the first four illustrations while the boat, now on calm seas, arriving safely to port is portrayed in the fifth (Fig. 6).

The poets and illustrators at Alfonso's court used a variety of written and oral sources for their compositions. The *cantigas* that describe the sea almost always contrast a menacing sea with a calm one after the Virgin intervenes to subdue a storm. Just as the poet of the *LA* often embellished or changed his written models, the compilers of the CSM added details to their sources to make their descriptions realistic and dramatic. They probably relied, too, on their own experiences of the vagaries of the sea to depict the oceans in all their fury and awesome power. The frightened men and women who find themselves caught in treacherous waters and call on the Virgin for help are models of devotion. Not only are they saved physically from drowning, they are also saved spiritually by their faith in Holy Mary.

For the poet of the *LA*, the sea is the most important feature in the natural world. The seas define the land masses and help us to understand the make-up of our world. But God has imposed limits on our knowledge of the world and human capacity to control the forces of nature is likewise limited. Alexander's probing into nature's secrets when he plunges beneath the surface of the sea to study the underwater world is a sin of pride that is, ultimately, his undoing. In the CSM only divine intervention can change nature's set courses and forces. The devout

followers of Holy Mary are saved from the ravages of nature by their faith, whereas, Alexander is destroyed by nature for his failure to recognize the limits God has placed on man. In depicting the sea as harbinger of the secrets and power of nature, both these works rely on literary models.

The fanciful elements in the *LA*, such as Alexander's glass submarine, are pure invention but other sections of this work strive for realism. In the *mappae mundi* contained in the *LA*, the poet carefully describes features of geography and toponymy and emphasizes the importance of the sea in defining land masses. While the poets composing the *CSM* were not concerned with cartographical descriptions of the world, they single out the sea as an area of the world dominated by the forces of nature where humans are especially vulnerable. This close association of the sea with awesome power is seen as both physical reality and part of an overall didactic purpose in both works. In the *CSM*, the Virgin's ability to calm the seas serves as a prime example of both her power and the limitless mercies she bestows on mankind. In the *LA*, Alexander's ambition to conquer the sea illustrates the sin of pride and he suffers the consequences of hubris. In both works, the descriptions of the sea are vivid and memorable. They draw on literary models for these depictions but they adapt them for their thirteenth-century audiences who shared with the authors a knowledge of the sea and a respectful fear of its power.

## Part II – Nature Tamed

### Chapter Four – The Urban Garden: *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*

Gardens encompass many elements of the natural world, harnessing and arranging them for human needs or esthetic desires. From the twelfth-century onward, lyric poetry often uses the paradisaical setting of the enclosed garden to explore the theme of human love with the description of the garden depending on Biblical and secular sources.<sup>213</sup> The garden was an essential part of Christian religious writings, not only about the lost Garden of Eden but also as metaphor for redemption. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the association of the Virgin with a garden and her perpetual virginity, symbolized by the *hortus conclusus*, was also an established allegorical motif and began as early as St. Jerome's *De perpetua virginitate Mariae*.<sup>214</sup> Pearsall and Salter remind us that the *hortus conclusus* became the dominant version of the paradise garden for expressions of both divine and carnal love.<sup>215</sup>

Paradoxically the enclosed garden, allegorically associated with the perpetual virginity of Holy Mary, in secular literature becomes the place most often associated with sexual encounters. The hidden garden as a place for consummation of passions and loss of virginity was well established in medieval love poetry. A good example is Chrétien de Troyes's romance *Clieges* (ca. 1176) where the lovers Fenice and Cligès hide away from the disapproval of their

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<sup>213</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 76. See also, George A. Shipley, "Non era hic locus: the Disconcerted Reader in Melibea's Garden," *Romance Philology* 27.3 (1974): 286–303; here 289. Carmen Añón Feliú adds that, in literature, the garden was well-established as a place for amorous encounters, especially "el encuentro amoroso siempre difícil y laborioso, fracasado muchas veces en los primeros intentos" (the amorous encounter that might prove difficult or laborious, failing many times in its first attempts). "El jardín de Melibea," *El jardín de Melibea*, ed. Juan Carlos Elorza Guinea (Burgos: Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2000), 229–53; here 232.

<sup>214</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea," (see note 213), 237.

<sup>215</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 76.

families and society.<sup>216</sup> Other examples, probably known directly or indirectly by Fernando de Rojas, is the garden as place of the adulterous affair in Marie de France's "Le lai de Guigemar (1170) and in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* (ca.1200). Gardens for nocturnal trysts also appear in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Decamerone* (ca.1350–1360) in the tale about Andreula and Gabriotto. In this tale, the element of the maidservant who facilitates the lovers' meeting is present and, perhaps, another source for elements in Rojas's work. The garden as the setting for sexual passion also appears in other stories in *Il decamerone* such as Lydia and her lover, Pyrrhus, who conspire to trick her husband so that they can make love under a pear tree. Perhaps the best-known example of the walled garden is found in the *Roman de la Rose* (Gullaume de Lorris, 1230 and Jean de Meun, 1275) and, no doubt, influenced Rojas's creation.<sup>217</sup> We should keep in mind that these gardens as settings in literary texts "had their material counterparts in the seigneurial life."<sup>218</sup> Authors and readers/listeners were familiar with walled gardens where nature was brought under design and control—a place for pleasure in contrast to the unpredictability of encounters with nature outside its confines.

When composing the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (1502)<sup>219</sup> Fernando de Rojas was certainly aware of the garden as rhetorical device, i.e., as a *locus amoenus* with the symbolic potential for the plants, trees, and other natural phenomena found there as well as the theological construct of the *hortus conclusus*. But the private, walled garden was also part of the urban environment of late fifteenth-century Spain that Rojas experienced on a daily basis. He adopts a literary convention, to be sure, when he sets the lovers' tryst in a walled garden but, in the details he includes in the description of this space, we also can identify the author's familiarity with urban garden design.<sup>220</sup> The garden in Melibea's house, as the place for the illicit meetings of the lovers in the *Tragicomedia*, is an essential part of the urban landscape where the plot develops. This work depends on its urban setting which provides proximity for frequent interactions between characters of

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<sup>216</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 76.

<sup>217</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea," (see note 213), 234.

<sup>218</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 76.

<sup>219</sup> Hereafter, *Tragicomedia*. Although most critics agree that the first act of the 21-act *Tragicomedia* is the work of an anonymous author and Fernando de Rojas is responsible for the rest of the text, I will here use Rojas as synonymous with "author" of the text. An earlier version, the *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, with only 16 acts, was first published in 1499.

<sup>220</sup> Complicating the issue of the interplay between art and reality is the fact that we do not know to what extent stately gardens attempted to mirror the gardens found in poetry. Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 77. Since this is an unknown factor I will show that Rojas probably relied both on his own experience of urban gardens as well as his extensive knowledge of the walled garden as literary motif.

different social standing and features of this urban environment participate in these events as they unfold.<sup>221</sup>

The *Tragicomedia*, commonly known by its popular title, *Celestina*, exists in two versions with two different original titles—the 16-act *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* was published in Burgos in 1499 and the expanded version in 21 acts, the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, some three years later. My use of the title, *Tragicomedia*, always refers to the longer, amended version. While most critics agree that the first *auto*, or act, in the *Comedia* and the *Tragicomedia* is not the work of Fernando de Rojas, they also agree that he is the author of the remaining *autos* in the two versions. Although the text is composed entirely in dialogue without recourse to a narrative voice, the *Tragicomedia* is not a play in the traditional sense. It is too long to be performed in its entirety and it lacks any sort of directorial notes; most critics refer to it as a hybrid genre or a novel in dialogue. Even though the work defies conventional genre classification, its plot is relatively simple: a high-born youth, Calisto, is smitten by a young aristocratic lady, Melibea, and in order to win her favors, enlists the aid of Celestina, a worldly-wise go-between. Celestina is a procuress, a madam, a maker of love potions and other remedies, restorer of lost maidenheads and facilitator of illicit love affairs—all for a price, of course. Mid-plot, Calisto's servants murder Celestina in a fit of greedy rage and are summarily decapitated for that crime. Despite these tragedies, the young lovers, Calisto and Melibea, consummate their affair only to have their happiness cut short when Calisto dies as the result of a fall from the ladder which he had used to scale the wall of Melibea's garden. Melibea, in response to the loss of her lover, commits suicide by throwing herself from a high tower.

There are at least two urban gardens that figure in the plot of the *Tragicomedia*. The first is found in the opening *auto*. In the first scene, Calisto enters a garden in search of his hunting falcon and encounters Melibea. Whether the escaped bird is a pretext for the encounter or the actual reason for his entrance into the garden is debatable. Chance meeting or not, the young people address each other as familiars, using first names:

Calisto: En esto veo, Melibea, la grandeza de Dios.

Melibea: ¿En qué, Calisto?

(85)<sup>222</sup>

[Calisto: Melibea, in this I see the greatness of God.

Melibea: In what, Calisto?]

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<sup>221</sup> On this point see my article "Urban Space in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*," *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 4 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 537–66.

<sup>222</sup> This and all subsequent citations are from the edition by Dorothy Severin: Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina*, ed. Dorothy S. Severin, 3rd ed. Letra Hispánicas, 4 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989). Numbers from the Severin edition indicate page numbers. All translations are my own.

While some scholars assume that the garden Calisto enters is that of Melibea's home, many others disagree with this conclusion. The critical debate about whether the garden where Melibea and Calisto have their first meeting (first, at least, in the all surviving versions of the *Comedia* and the *Tragicomedia*) is the same one where the lovers eventually have their rendezvous has waged for decades.<sup>223</sup> One important fact to keep in mind is that the garden in Act I is one that Calisto enters freely; there is no mention of high walls around the garden or any other obstacle to keep him from entering it at will. By contrast, the garden of Melibea's home is enclosed by very high walls and one cannot enter it by accident or chance. Thus, we can assume that the garden of Act I is an open space where the meeting of Melibea and Calisto sets the plot of the *Tragicomedia* in action. Joseph Snow claims that Pleberio has a second home, in the outlying areas of the city, with a garden in which Melibea is roaming freely without chaperones. Calisto could have easily entered this sort of garden in pursuit of his lost falcon and encountered Melibea there.<sup>224</sup>

Since Calisto is hunting, we would expect to find him outside the city walls so this sort of open garden is more probable than the one in Melibea's home for the couple's first meeting. Also, since the first *auto* begins abruptly with the above-cited conversation between Calisto and Melibea, the only way we as readers know that it takes place in a garden is in information provided in the *Argumento* of the first act. The *argumentos* or *résumés* of the action appear at the beginning of each of the acts in the *Comedia* and the *Tragicomedia*. In the *argumento* of Act I we read "Entrando Calisto una huerta empos dun falcon suyo, halló y a Melibea. . ." (85) (Calisto, entering a garden in pursuit of his falcon, encountered Melibea there). Donald McGrady believes that the original codex of Act I with which Rojas was working was missing the beginning folio or folios and Rojas penned this *argumento* to fill in the missing information.<sup>225</sup> Rojas returns to the motif of the missing falcon

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<sup>223</sup> Among the many articles on this subject, the following are especially important to the development of theories about the garden in the *Tragicomedia*: Donald McGrady, "Entrando Calisto una huerta... and Other Textual Problems in the *Celestina*," *Hispanic Review* 63(1995): 433–40; Emilio Orozco Díaz, "El huerto de Melibea (Para el estudio del tema del jardín en la poesía del siglo XV)," *Arbor* 65 (1951), rpt. in *Paisaje y sentimiento de la naturaleza en la poesía española* (Madrid: Ediciones del Centro, 1974), 65–76; George A. Shipley, "Non era hic locus" (see note 213); James R. Stamm, "De 'huerta' a 'huerto', elementos líricos-bucólicos en *La Celestina*," *La Celestina y su contorno social: Actas del I Congreso Internacional sobre La Celestina* (Barcelona: Borrás Ediciones, 1977), 81–88; William D. Truesdell, "The *Hortus Conclusus* Tradition and the Implications of its Absence in The *Celestina*," *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 20 (1973): 257–77; and, Alfredo Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea: Parodia y subversión de un topos medieval," *Celestinesca* 27 (2003): 125–48.

<sup>224</sup> Joseph T. Snow, "Celestina's Houses," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 86.1 (2009): 133–42; here 134–35.

<sup>225</sup> Donald McGrady, "The Problematic Beginning of *Celestina*," *Celestinesca* 18.2 (1994): 31–51; here 39.

in a dialogue between Calisto and Pármeno in Act II. When Pármeno is trying to dissuade his master from pursuing Melibea and employing Celestina, he mentions the falcon Calisto had been pursuing when he encounters Melibea:

Señor, porque perderse el otro día el *nebli*<sup>226</sup> fue causa de tu entrada en la huerta de Melibea<sup>227</sup> a le buscar, la entrada causa de la ver y hablar, la habla engendró amor; el amor parió tu pena; la pena causará perder tu cuerpo y el alma y hazienda (134–35).

[Sir, because you lost the falcon the other day, you entered Melibea's garden to look for it, this caused you to see her and speak with her, the conversation caused you to fall in love; from love was born your pain; the pain will cause you to lose your body and your soul and your wealth.]

Vivanco points out the significance of Pármeno specifying that the lost bird is a *nebli*. Since this was a very valuable bird and also considered to be one of the noblest, we would expect its owner, Calisto, to be of the highest nobility, both in social status and character. But, as this critic reminds us, Calisto, like his falcon, escapes from the prescribed parameters for noble behavior and, in his obsession for Melibea, perverts any nobility of character we might have expected of him.<sup>228</sup>

In the account, by Pármeno, of Calisto's pursuit of the lost falcon, he uses the word *huerta* to describe Melibea's garden. Stamm observes that this is the only use of this term in the entire text of the *Tragicomedia* if we do not consider its inclusion in the *argumentos*. He sees its insertion here, in the commentary of Pármeno, as an effort on Rojas's part to give internal logic to the work whose opening scene he did not know.<sup>229</sup> Sempronio mentions another of Calisto's hawks or falcons in the first act when Calisto calls for him. The servant's excuse for not appearing right away is that he had been caring for a *girifalte*,<sup>230</sup> a valuable hunting bird, that had fallen from its perch: "Abatióse el girifalte y vénele a endereçar en al alcándara" (87) (The

<sup>226</sup> Emphasis mine. The *nebli* is a variety of falcon. The *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española stipulates that the *nebli* "Por su valor y rápido vuelo era muy estimado para la caza de cetrería" (II, 1431) (For its bravery and rapid flight was highly prized for hunting with falcons) (see note 63).

<sup>227</sup> By Act II, Rojas specifies, through the analysis offered by Pármeno, that the garden of the opening scene is that of Melibea. But this is not evident in either the first act itself or its *argumento*.

<sup>228</sup> Laura Vivanco, "Birds of a Feather: Predator and Prey in *Celestina*," *Celestinesca* 26 (2002): 5–27; here 12.

<sup>229</sup> Stamm, "De 'heurtá' a 'huerto'" (see note 223), 82.

<sup>230</sup> *Girifalte* in modern Spanish is *gerifalte* defined by the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española (see note 63) as: "Ave rapaz con plumaje pardo con rayas claras en las piernas de las alas y cola, y blanquecino con listas cenicientas en el vientre. Es el halcón mayor que se conoce, pues tiene seis decímetros de largo y catorce de envergadura; fue muy estimado como ave cetrería, y vive ordinariamente en el norte de Europa" (I, 1037) (A raptor with dark plumage and lighter stripes on the legs, wings, and tail, and whitish with ashen-colored strips on the belly. It is the largest falcon known and measures six decimeters in length and fourteen in wingspan; it was very prized as a hunting bird, and ordinarily lives in Northern Europe.) Emphasis mine.

*gerifalte* fell and I have come to set him back on his perch). McGrady asserts that Rojas mentions the *neblí* in Act II to clarify that the *gerifalte* mentioned in the Act I by the anonymous author is not the falcon or hawk that Calisto lost before the beginning of the *Tragicomedia*.<sup>231</sup> The *gerifalte* was considered a cowardly bird and one that was difficult to train. But it was also a ruthless killer. We will see these same characteristics manifest in Sempronio who constantly lies to his master, demonstrates his cowardice, is quick-tempered, and violent in his attack on Celestina later in the work.<sup>232</sup>

The importance of the hunting bird(s) as motive for Calisto's first encounter with Melibea in the text of the *Tragicomedia* is for our purposes, at least, two-fold. Firstly, an ecocritical reading takes into account the interdependence between humans and animals in literary texts.<sup>233</sup> The raptor is part of the natural world but the falcon(s) that appear in the *Tragicomedia* have been trained to obey the will of their master and serve for purposes of the hunt. The falcons or hawks in the *Tragicomedia* do not hunt to feed themselves and their young as untamed birds because any prey they kill is intended for Calisto. Just as we shall see that the natural elements found in the garden in the *Tragicomedia* are arranged and groomed for human pleasure, the hunting birds in the *Tragicomedia* are similarly appropriated from their natural environment and harnessed to the will of their owner.

On a symbolic level, raptors also carried certain associations that would have been apparent to Rojas's readers. The falcon was traditionally associated with rapine appetite and desire<sup>234</sup> and, in the literature of courtly love, it was a symbol and metaphor for passion.<sup>235</sup> A falcon is considered valuable only when it is tamed and controlled. When Calisto loses his valuable falcon, the bird ceases to be under its master's control, suggesting that Calisto will also lose control of his passions as he blindly pursues Melibea.<sup>236</sup> On this point, Gerli observes: "Extrapolating from

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<sup>231</sup> McGrady, "The Problematic Beginning" (see note 225), 44: "One of the problems he [Rojas] faced was Sempronio's mention of the *girifalte*. . . which might be misunderstood to mean that this was Calisto's lost hawk, which would have returned home even to its master. Since it was important that the sinister augury associated with stray falcons be maintained (to foreshadow Calisto's imminent demise), Rojas inserted in the second Act . . . a mention of the lost *neblí*."

<sup>232</sup> Vivanco, "Birds of a Feather" (see note 228), 13–14.

<sup>233</sup> Carmen Flys Junquera, José Maneul Marrero Henríquez, and Julia Bareela Vigal, ed., *Ecocríticas: literatura y medio ambiente* (Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2010), 18.

<sup>234</sup> F. M. Weinberg, "Aspects of Symbolism in *La Celestina*," *Modern Language Notes* 86 (1971): 136–53; here 137.

<sup>235</sup> Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea," (see note 223), 132.

<sup>236</sup> E. Michael Gerli, "Calisto's Hawk and the Images of Medieval Tradition," *Romania* 104 (1983): 83–101; here 86: "[the hawk or falcon] is closely identified not only with . . . aggressive, primitive, and sometimes evil tendencies, but also with the loss of volition and daring, passionate love—the same love that is at the heart of the *Celestina* and that consumes both Calisto and Melibea."

the initial falconry image at the beginning of the work, Melibea analogically becomes the coveted quarry and fulfills the same function as the prey in the allegorized hunt.<sup>237</sup> Weinberg sees the escape of Calisto's falcon as a prefiguration of the death of all the protagonists.<sup>238</sup> The contrast between the domesticated falcon and the wild one is also a motif in Christian symbolism where the former represents the saintly man, or a pagan who has converted to Christianity, and the latter is considered the incarnation of bad actions or perverse feelings.<sup>239</sup> Even on the level of Christian imagery, then, a falcon who has escaped his master's control is a harbinger of corruption and potential doom.<sup>240</sup> The symbolic contrast of the wild bird that has been domesticated as a force for good, and the raptor in its natural state as a force for evil is evident from the beginning of the *Tragicomedia*. Throughout the work, escaped birds symbolize unleashed passion that brings about destruction.<sup>241</sup>

While I agree that the birds, especially the raptors, are replete with symbolic significance, we should also remember that Rojas and his readers had first-hand knowledge of falcons as well as other forms of domesticated birds. Falcons in their environs were valuable commodities for hunters and the birds' natural instinct to hunt for sustenance is replaced by hunting as sport.

As we have seen, the garden where Calisto and Melibea have their (chance) meeting when Calisto pursues his lost falcon is probably not the walled garden inside the confines of Melibea's home. In the urban garden of Melibea's home, she and Calisto sexually consummate their relationship and Calisto meets his tragic end falling from the high walls surrounding the garden. Just as the falcon in Act I carried a host of traditional symbolic significance so, too, does the idea of a garden, especially an enclosed one as I have mentioned.<sup>242</sup> The enclosed medieval garden belongs to two worlds—that of the fable, invention and legend, and that of everyday reality. The spaces it generates, inheritors of the original Paradise, coexist in the intangible work of the imagination and in the realm of real life.<sup>243</sup> Certainly, most readers would have been aware of the symbolic tradition in literary and religious imagery of the enclosed garden—its associations with the

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<sup>237</sup> Gerli, "Calisto's Hawk" (see note 236), 98.

<sup>238</sup> Weinberg, "Aspects of Symbolism" (see note 234), 138. See also Gerli, "Calisto's Hawk" (see note 236), 100.

<sup>239</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 232.

<sup>240</sup> Weinberg, "Aspects of Symbolism" (see note 234), 138, also sees the escaped falcon as representative of Celestina since she is the predatory agent who benefits from Calisto's lust for Melibea.

<sup>241</sup> Vivanco, "Birds of a Feather" (see 228), 5, concludes that the birds in the *Tragicomedia* illustrate "the destructive nature of physical passion and the indiscriminate manner in which it affects all social classes."

<sup>242</sup> See especially McGrady, "The Problematic Beginning" (see note 225) 46.

<sup>243</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea," (see note 213), 229.

*locus amoenus* of courtly love, the Biblical Paradise of Eden, and the Virgin Mary as the *hortus conclusus*.<sup>244</sup> But these associations do not discredit a reading of the garden also as a social reality, the part of the urban landscape so important as the setting for the plot of the *Tragicomedia*.

Orozco-Díaz speaks of the garden as representing, at the same time, the natural and the artificial.<sup>245</sup> It is a man-made structure where elements of nature are harnessed for human enjoyment or recreation, but these natural elements also have value and associations that exist outside the structure imposed on them. Walls or hedges around the garden are usually present in the descriptions of gardens in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>246</sup> These barriers were required to delineate the garden space and defend its confines from anyone not authorized to enter it. On this point I agree with Sosa Velasco who attests that the garden is enclosed precisely to guard and conserve as much the richness and beauty there present as the lives of those who inhabit it.<sup>247</sup> The fixed border corresponded to practical necessities, but it also established a dichotomy of inside-outside which is so important for understanding the duality of the medieval garden.<sup>248</sup> The world inside the garden is under human control and represents a safe refuge both from the untamed, natural world as well as from potential dangers present in the urban society. On this point, Shipley calls the garden in the *Tragicomedia* "a territory declared independent of the outside world and protected from it."<sup>249</sup> The urban garden represented an ordered space and was seen as a place of peace, security, and beauty for human enjoyment.<sup>250</sup>

In the *Tragicomedia* Melibea's garden is surrounded by high walls. When Calisto scales them with a ladder in order to gain access in Act XIV, Melibea expresses fear when he jumps down into the garden from such a great height: "O mi señor, no saltes de tan alto, que me morré en verlo; baxa, baxa poco a poco por el scala . . ." (284) (O my lord, don't jump from so high up; it scares me to death; climb down carefully little by little using the ladder . . .).<sup>251</sup> Once having entered

<sup>244</sup> Gerhard Jaritz, "Natures Images—Image Nature: Visual Representations and their Function in the Late Middle Ages," *People and Nature in Historical Perspective*, ed. József Laszlovsky and Péter Szabó (Budapest: Central European University Department of Medieval Studies and Archaeolingua, 2008), 53–63; here 55.

<sup>245</sup> Orozco-Díaz, "El huerto de Melibea," (see note 223), 65, calls Melibea's garden "la primera dramatización de la Naturaleza que ofrece la literatura española" (the first dramatization of Nature offered in Spanish literature). While this statement is not entirely accurate, it does reflect the singular importance of Melibea's garden in the *Tragicomedia*.

<sup>246</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea" (see note 213), 229.

<sup>247</sup> Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea" (see note 223), 134.

<sup>248</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea" (see note 213), 229.

<sup>249</sup> Shipley, "*Non erat hic locus*" (see note 213), 291.

<sup>250</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea" (see note 213), 230.

<sup>251</sup> The reference to the high walls and dying of fright are, of course, precursors to Calisto's final

the garden, Calisto's presence violates, both physically and symbolically, the space intended as a refuge inside Pleberio's home. According to Weinberg, "The fortress, the garden wall and the locked door, represent Melibea's personal integrity, her honor, her class, her body as an illusory paradise in a symbolic complex. . . ." <sup>252</sup> The symbolic association of Calisto's entrance into the garden and the deflowering of the virginal Melibea within its grounds is obvious. When he breeches the walls of the garden he enters a space designed to protect "todo lo hermoso, el tesoro inalcanzable, la virtud preciosa y delicada" <sup>253</sup> (all the beauty, the unreachable treasure, and precious and delicate virtue). Sosa Velasco points out that neither the height nor breadth of the walls Pleberio has erected around his garden is sufficient to prevent its invasion by Calisto. <sup>254</sup> The space of Melibea's body is intimately associated with and, in fact, symbolically equal to the space of the garden in that she is the protected commodity within a prohibited space. When Calisto possesses her sexually, both she and the garden are invaded and dominated.

After his first sexual encounter with Melibea, Calisto abruptly leaves at first light. Back in his own house, he shuts himself away in his room where he delivers a long monologue, reflecting on the deaths of his servants, Sempronio and Pármeno, and the previous night's events. In this soliloquy he equates Melibea's garden to a "paraíso dulce" (292) <sup>255</sup> (sweet paradise) where he enjoys the sweet delights of his lover "entre aquellas suaves plantas y fresca verdura" (292) (among those gentle plants and fresh greenery). The garden is paradise for Calisto because it is the location where his sexual desires were fulfilled. But readers of the *Tragicomedia* would also recognize the host of symbolic meanings associated with Calisto's use of the word "paradise." <sup>256</sup> The theme of the garden of paradise reminded the Christian community that, at one time, a perfect love existed for Adam and Eve in a place of perfect harmony and that this ideal space was lost through human sin. <sup>257</sup> The sin of Calisto and Melibea thus takes on Biblical proportions and further presages the destruction that will befall them.

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mortal fall from these same walls. There are numerous other references throughout the *Tragicomedia* to falling — falling from high places, falling from grace, falling on hard times, etc. — all pointing to Calisto's, Melibea's, Sempronio's, Pármeno's, and Celestina's deaths.

<sup>252</sup> Weinberg, "Aspects of Symbolism" (see note 234), 138.

<sup>253</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea" (see note 213), 230.

<sup>254</sup> Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea" (see note 223), 134. Deborah Ellis, "'¡Adoios paredes!': The Image of the Home in *Celestina*," *Celestinesca* 5.2 (1981): 1–21; here 9–10, reminds us that Melibea is never successfully *encerrada* (enclosed).

<sup>255</sup> On linking Melibea's garden with the image of the Garden of Eden, see Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea" (see note 223), 134.

<sup>256</sup> It is significant that Calisto calls Melibea's garden a paradise because the etymology of paradise corresponds to a closed space. Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea" (see note 213), 231.

<sup>257</sup> Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea" (see note 223), 129.

Calisto's recollection of Melibea's garden brings the place to life in his imagination. According to Orozco-Díaz "el huerto se ha convertido en una realidad que vive en la mente de todos, Calisto, en el lento pasar de las horas del día pensará . . . en aquel *paraíso* de su huerto . . . Un paraíso será también para los criados que, tras sus tapias, escuchan envidiosos las vehementes palabras de su amo y adivinan sus atrevidas acciones" (the garden has been converted into a reality that lives in the mind of all, Calisto, in the long hours of the day will think. . . about that paradise of the garden . . . It will also be a paradise for the servants who, from outside its wall, will listen enviously to the impassioned words of their master and will conjecture about his bold deeds).<sup>258</sup> The lovers are never truly alone in the garden. Calisto's servants participate in helping him to scale its walls and listen and comment on what is transpiring between Melibea and Calisto. Also, Melibea's maid, Lucrecia, is privy to the couple's encounters. Calisto sees the garden as his and Melibea's private paradise, but this space is shared by others and his actions there will have repercussions beyond its walls.

During his soliloquy in Act XIV, Calisto expresses his impatience for night to fall so that he can again be with Melibea in the garden. Calisto asks the sun to move faster across the daytime sky and for the clocks to run ahead of time. He then realizes the madness of these desires and waxes elegantly about the workings of nature which do not respond to human desires but follow a set course:

No aprenden los cursos naturales a rodearse sin orden, que a todos es un ygual curso, a todos un mesmo espacio para muerte y vida, un limitado término a los secretos movimientos del alto firmamento celestial, de los planetas y norte, de los crecimientos y mengua de la menstrea luna. Todo se rige con un freno ygual, todo se mueve con ygual spuela: cielo, tierra, mar, huego, viento, calor, frío (292).

[The natural courses do not know how to run without order, for it is the same order for everyone, for all the same space for death and life, a limited term to the secret movements of the celestial firmament on high, of the planets and north, of the waxing and waning of the monthly moon. Everything is ruled by equal restraints, everything moves with equal action: heaven, land, sea, fire, wind, heat, cold.]

I quote this passage in its entirety because it manifests a certain sense of humility on Calisto's part when he is faced with the realities of nature. Despite his extreme egotism with regard to the blind pursuit of Melibea (even at the costs of others' lives), he cannot change nature's course or make time speed up. His nocturnal visits with Melibea will occur only when the sun is set and he can enter undetected into the garden.<sup>259</sup> Orozco-Díaz comments on Rojas's choice of nighttime for the

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<sup>258</sup> Orozco-Díaz, "El huerto de Melibea," (see note 223), 75.

<sup>259</sup> José Jiménez Lozano also speaks about the association of night with the clandestine affair between Calisto and Melibea. "El jardín de Melibea," *El jardín de Melibea*, ed. Juan Carlos Elorza Guinea (Burgos: Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V

lovers' meeting as essential not only for the sake of secrecy but also because night is "la hora en que la seducción sensorial del jardín se exalta"<sup>260</sup> (the time when the sensual seduction of the garden is at its peak). The garden at night does, indeed, provide sensual pleasures for the lovers, but, as we have seen, even under cover of darkness Calisto and Melibea are not truly alone.

On the night of Calisto's final and fatal rendezvous with Melibea in the garden, he listens to her singing with her maid, Lucrecia, before making his presence known to the women. Lucrecia sings about the flowers in the garden and the joy of the gardener who picks them.<sup>261</sup> The allusion to picking flowers hardly needs comment. It is especially telling that Melibea delights in listening to Lucrecia's song about her affair with Calisto: "O cuán dulce me es oírte; de gozo me deshago. No cesses, por mi amor" (320) (Oh how sweet it is to hear you; I'm overcome with joy. For love's sake, don't stop). Lucrecia specifically mentions "los lirios y el açucena" (320) (irises and white lilies) in the song. Orozco-Díaz identifies these flowers with spring and states that Rojas chose this season for the lovers' meetings when the natural beauty of the garden would be at its seductive peak.<sup>262</sup> On a symbolic level, the *azucena* (white lily) was particularly identified with the Virgin and is sometimes defined as the Madonna or Annunciation Lily. Sosa Velasco sees in Lucrecia's song a subversion of a song in praise of the Virgin Mary and Christian virtues.<sup>263</sup> But, by this point in the text, Melibea is no longer a virgin and the image of the plucked lily in Lucrecia's song alludes to this fact.

The next element of the garden that Lucrecia names in her song is the "fuente clara" (321) (clear fountain or spring). According to Añón Feliú, water is an essential element in garden scenes, "donde se conjuga lo mitológico y lo filosófico con lo estético y lo utilitario"<sup>264</sup> (where the mythological and the philosophical are joined to the esthetic and the utilitarian). In other words, water is fundamental for garden cultivation but, at the same time, the image of the clear running fountain or spring conjures up a host of symbolic associations. For example, in Christian mythology water is the element of spiritual initiation in the rite of baptism, and the four rivers in the Garden of Eden are essential elements in the description of the earthly paradise. Calisto likens Melibea's garden to the paradise of Eden and, just as the Biblical paradise had been a place of temptation and forbidden desire, so too

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(2000), 25–32; here 27–28.

<sup>260</sup> Orozco-Díaz, "El huerto de Melibea" (see note 223), 75.

<sup>261</sup> Peter Russell notes that the song belongs to the tradition of the *cantigas d'amigo* in which the woman sings about her impatience and anxiety waiting for the arrival of her lover. Fernando de Rojas, *Comedia o Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, ed. Peter E. Russell. Clásicos Castalia, 191 (Madrid: Castalia, 1991), 566.

<sup>262</sup> Orozco-Díaz, "El huerto de Melibea" (see note 223), 74.

<sup>263</sup> Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea" (see note 223), 140.

<sup>264</sup> Añón Feliú, "El jardín de Melibea" (see note 213), 249.

the babbling fountain of Melibea's garden serves both to parody and bring to mind the Garden of Eden. The soothing and esthetic effects associated with water are also part of the seductive atmosphere which Lucrecia conjures with the words of her song.

The song's evocation of a peaceful spring night, babbling fountain, and fragrant flowers abruptly ends when, in the following stanza, Lucrecia compares the pleasure that Calisto enjoys with Melibea to that of a wolf when he spies cattle.<sup>265</sup> The image of the hungry wolf looking for food is another example of the hunting motif, initially present in Act I when Calisto searches for his falcon. Here, in the garden, the wolf enjoys his prey and Melibea, likewise, enjoys having been ensnared by Calisto. She has moved from object of desire to active participant in this game of the hunt.

In her song lyrics, Lucrecia equates the degree of Calisto's and Melibea's desire with Calisto's frequent visits to the garden: "Nunca fue más deseado / amador de su amiga, / ni huerto más visitado. . ." (321).<sup>266</sup> (Never was a lover so desired by his beloved, nor garden more visited). The implication is, of course, that Calisto's frequent visits to the garden are also frequent visits to Melibea's body, which is here equated with the garden itself. At this point Melibea is so enchanted by Lucrecia's song that she joins in the singing. They begin their duet by evoking natural elements found in the garden. They sing of the "dulces árboles sombrados" (321) (sweet shade trees) and the stars that are witnesses to their nighttime encounters. Melibea then continues the song alone calling on parrots and nightingales to carry word to Calisto that she is waiting anxiously for him.<sup>267</sup> The nightingale is a bird frequently found in love poetry because of its association with nighttime when lovers' trysts usually take place. The mention of the parrot is less common but, because of its ability to mimic human speech, it would seem to be a logical choice to convey Melibea's desires to her lover.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Alan D. Deyermond, "La *Celestina* como cancionero," *Cinco siglos de Celestina: Aportaciones interpretativas*, ed. Rafael Beltrán and José Luis Canet (València: Universitat de València, 1997), 91–105; here 99, reminds us of the sinister, and even disastrous, connotation of the mention of the wolf in Lucrecia's song.

<sup>266</sup> Shipley, "Non erat hic locus" (see note 213), 295, contrasts Lucrecia's version of the lovers' garden with the curse Elicia wishes on it in Act XV (295). Stamm, "De 'huerta' a 'huerto'" (see note 223), 84, also comments on the curse and equates Lucrecia's representation of benevolent nature in the song with the joy that Melibea feels at the impending arrival of her lover.

<sup>267</sup> Deyermond, "La *Celestina* como cancionero" (see note 265), 102, observes that the women's songs represent the feminine tradition of *cancionero* poetry unlike the other songs Rojas includes in the *Tragicomedia*.

<sup>268</sup> Russell, ed., *Comedia o Tragicomedia* (see note 261), 568, fn. 31, questions the translation of *papagayo* in this passage to the modern equivalent of parrot. He argues that *papagayo* is actually related in medieval Spanish to *gayo* or jay.

Unbeknownst to the two women, Calisto has been listening to their singing. When he hears Melibea's lament for his delay he quickly descends the ladder and enters the garden. He speaks of their mutual desire for one another: "¿cómo no podiste más tiempo çofrir sin interrumpir tu gozo y complir el desseo de entramos?" (322) (how could I any longer suffer without interrupting your joy and fulfill our mutual desires?). Melibea welcomes him saying that the garden itself delights in his coming: "Todo se goza este huerto con tu venida" (322) (The whole garden delights in your arrival). She sees the garden as a living participant in their sexual delights and tells Calisto:

Oye la corriente agua desta fontesica, quanto más suave murmurio y zurrío lleva por entre las frescas yervas. Escucha los altos cipresses, cómo se dan paz unos ramos con otros por intercessión de un templadico viento que los menea. Mira sus quietas sombras, quán oscuras y aparejadas están para encobrir nuestro deleyte (323).<sup>269</sup>

[Listen to the running water of that little fountain, how sweetly it murmurs and whispers among the fresh grasses. Listen to the tall cypress trees as their branches blow in the gentle breeze and bring a feeling of peace. Look at the quiet shadows that give us darkness where we might hide and take our delight.]

Melibea begins this description with the water of the fountain that Lucrecia had already sung about in her song. In her exaltation of the garden she specifically mentions the cypress trees, noteworthy because of their phallic shape. These trees are also associated with death and with funerals because of the incorruptibility of its wood. For these reasons, one frequently finds cypresses planted in cemeteries.<sup>270</sup> Melibea's mention of the cypress is ironic because their symbolic meanings prefigure Calisto's death when he leaves the garden later that night.<sup>271</sup> These trees will cast the shadows where the lovers will enjoy each other under cover of darkness. Shipley speaks of the trees as the "lovers' allies."<sup>272</sup> The trees however, ironically, are casting the shadow of death over them since Calisto will soon fall to his death and Melibea will subsequently commit suicide.

Critics have pointed out that the description of the garden that Melibea offers in Act XIX had already been undermined by the prostitute Elicia in Act XV when she vows revenge on the two lovers for causing the deaths of Celestina,

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<sup>269</sup> The uses of diminutives, such as *fontesica* and *templadico* add to the idealized description. On Melibea's description of the garden, see Stamm, "De 'huerta' a 'huerto'" (see note 223), 87.

<sup>270</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 129.

<sup>271</sup> Severin, ed., *La Celestina* (see note 222), 323, fn. 8, states that the mention of cypress trees is a premonition of Calisto's death and the fact that they give peace links sexual love with the religious.

<sup>272</sup> Shipley, "Non erat hic locus" (see note 213), 288.

Sempronio, and Pármemo.<sup>273</sup> Elicia, in her conversation with Areúsa after the deaths of Celestina, Sempronio and Pármemo, declares:

O Calisto y Melibea, causadores de tantas muertes, mal fin ayan vuestros amores, en mal sabor se conviertan vuestros dulces plazerres; tórnese lloro vuestra gloria, trabajo vuestro descanso; las yervas deleytosas donde tomáys los hurtados solazes se conviertan en culebras; los cantares se os tornen lloro; los sombreros árboles del huerto se sequen con vuestra vista; sus flores olorosas se tornen de negra color. (298)

[Oh Calisto and Melibea, responsible for so many deaths, may you have a bad end, may your sweet pleasures be changed into bitterness; your glory be turned into wailing, your rest into toil; may the delightful grasses where you take your stolen pleasures be turned into snakes; your songs turned into tears; may the shade trees of the garden dry up when you look at them; may its sweet-smelling flowers turn black.]

Elicia specifically curses the grasses, trees, and flowers of the garden, turning them all into presages of the lovers' deaths. Shipley calls this passage a "demonic undoing of the *locus amoenus*."<sup>274</sup> This critic adds that her desire for the grasses to turn into snakes and for the flowers to become black and inodorous indicate that her curse intends to interrupt the "normal progress of the natural cycle."<sup>275</sup> In her need for revenge, Elicia curses the garden itself, hoping to turn the lovers' *locus amoenus* into a *locus horrendus*. The utter destruction of the lovers' earthly paradise for Elicia also means the deaths of Calisto and Melibea.

The garden environs become both witness and participant in the lovers' sexual encounters. According to Shipley, the scene in the garden in Act XIX serves to link together the world of nature and that of human experience: "the garden becomes for a time the structural and functional equivalent, for Melibea and Calisto, of the center of the world."<sup>276</sup> The lovers view the garden as a kind of urban oasis where they believe they can keep their affair private. They try, unsuccessfully, to artificially transplant a pristine, pastoral environment into the urban landscape—a place where love flowers among the stone and brick of the city.<sup>277</sup> But the garden environ, as we have seen, does not insure complete privacy and the lovers cannot

<sup>273</sup> For example, see Shipley, "Non erat hic locus," (see note 213) and Orozco-Díaz, "El huerto de Melibea," (see note 223).

<sup>274</sup> Shipley, "Non erat hic locus" (see note 213), 294.

<sup>275</sup> Shipley, "Non erat hic locus" (see note 213), 294.

<sup>276</sup> Shipley, "Non erat hic locus" (see note 213), 288.

<sup>277</sup> Sosa Velasco, "El huerto de Melibea," (see note 223), 138, sees Melibea's garden as both a public and private space within the city: "Si [el huerto] forma parte de la vida privada porque pertenece a la estructura espacial del hogar, se constituye también como componente de la vida pública al permitir la entrada a otros individuos provenientes de esa misma esfera, como es el caso de un Calisto que llega del exterior" (If it [the garden] forms part of private lands because it belongs to the spatial structure of the home, it also constitutes a component of public life because it permits the entrance of people from the vicinity to enter from outside, such as is the case with Calisto.)

escape the ever-present gaze of other urban dwellers. Calisto and Melibea see the garden not only as a spatial retreat but also a temporal one. Their month of bliss is artificial time when they live only for the nighttime hours in the garden and spend the other hours of the days in anticipation of those hours. But, even though Calisto wanted to change the passage of time itself, he, and all the other characters in the *Tragicomedia*, are bound by its natural course. Just as the lovers are bound to time, they are also bound to their larger society and the garden will prove to be an inadequate refuge from either the vagaries of fate or the social mores of the world outside its walls.

The fact that Calisto has invaded the confines of Pleberio's house as well as Melibea's body constitutes a breach to the social fabric/façade. Immediately after losing her virginity, Melibea admits to having brought shame and dishonor on her household: "¡O mi padre honrrado, cómo he dañado tu fama y dado causa y lugar a quebrantar tu casa!" (286) (Oh my honorable father, how I have damaged your reputation and enabled your house to be ravished!). And, when speaking to her father in her final soliloquy before throwing herself from the tower, she confesses to having freely given Calisto access to the garden that Pleberio had considered a safe haven for his family. She tells him how Calisto had entered the garden using a ladder to scale its high walls, taken her virginity and, thus, destroyed the honor of his household: "Quebrantó con escalas las paredes de tu huerto; quebrantó mi propósito; perdí mi virginidad" (334) (He breached the walls of your garden with a ladder; he broke down my will; I lost my virginity). Calisto's climbing up the ladder to enter the paradise of the garden is, ironically, "an antechamber to hell" according to Weinberg.<sup>278</sup> And Melibea climbs the tower, symbolic in the courtly tradition of chastity, to commit suicide because the tower, also a part of the fortified house, has also been violated. The garden and the tower are both corrupted, just as Melibea has been, and she sees no recourse but suicide given the death of her lover and the irretrievable loss of her virginity and her honor.<sup>279</sup>

Rojas used his knowledge about urban gardens and noble houses as settings also familiar to his audience. Moreover, he played on the many literary and religious associations related to the idea of the enclosed garden when choosing it as the setting for the lovers' meetings. The urban garden, a man-made space where nature is tamed for human needs or desires, cannot contain the unbridled passion of Calisto and Melibea or the disastrous consequences resulting from that illicit passion. The lovers relish the beauty of the garden and its fountain, trees, flowers, and songbirds only inasmuch as these elements contribute to their own pleasure. The garden and the interludes that Calisto and Melibea enjoy there are, as Shipley

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<sup>278</sup> Weinberg, "Aspects of Symbolism" (see note 234), 142.

<sup>279</sup> Weinberg, "Aspects of Symbolism" (see note 234), 143.

says, "fragile."<sup>280</sup> That space is ultimately insubstantial and the lovers cannot sustain the spatial and temporal escape from reality that the garden represents for them. Calisto and Melibea project onto the garden of Pleberio's house properties which its creator did not envision and powers that any setting, however idyllic it may appear, can insure. All the positive attributes associated with this pleasant space will ultimately be perverted as the lovers' garden is transformed into the site of death and destruction in the world *al revés* of the *Tragicomedia*.

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<sup>280</sup> Shipley, "Non erat hic locus" (see note 213), 296.

## Chapter Five – Fields

### *Cantigas de Santa Maria, Milagros de Nuestra Señora, Poema de Mio Cid, and Libro de Alexandre*

In her book *Greenery*, Gillian Rudd contrasts natural areas, considered outside of human control—forests, wilderness, and coastlines—with the cultivated field, the direct product of the history of human management of the land. She asserts that “Although the notion of wild nature looms large in our imaginations, the majority of our actual physical encounters with the vegetative and animal world take place within more familiar and domestic domains, such as fields and gardens.”<sup>281</sup> The field, literally, is ground set apart from the rest of the untamed natural world where humans seek to exclude any unwelcome plant or animal. The harnessing of land for agriculture and other domestic endeavors forms part of the most ancient of traditions. In the mythologies of almost all civilizations, agriculture was considered a divine gift.<sup>282</sup> And, in many of the early myths surrounding the advent of agriculture, those who were given the gift of farming knowledge were considered superior to non-farmers or hunter-gatherers. Those who did not farm were marginalized as “primitive, wild, uncivilized, lawless, graceless and brutish.”<sup>283</sup>

Medieval audiences saw the cultivated field, especially one that was productive, as emblematic of God’s favor. Given this attitude, the land and the rituals of its management drew the attention of medieval writers and artists.<sup>284</sup> According to Pearsall and Salter, “in the Christian dispensation, the world outside Paradise was most safely recomposed about the work of man, and, especially, about his patient husbandry of earth and animals, as this was dictated by the processes of growth,

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<sup>281</sup> Rudd, *Greenery* (see note 2), 165.

<sup>282</sup> Jack A. Harlan, *The Living Fields: Our Agricultural Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>283</sup> Harlan, *The Living Fields* (see note 282), 5.

<sup>284</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 128.

by planetary cycles, and by human need, divinely implanted.”<sup>285</sup> Agricultural treatises circulating in the Middle Ages regard the concept of the cultivated field as a space created by humans and set apart where one tames nature through knowledge and hard work.<sup>286</sup> Pre-modern horticultural manuals and literary texts, rather than praising the unspoiled tracts of pristine landscape so common in later periods, focus primarily on wise control, care-taking, and stewardship of cultivated land.<sup>287</sup>

Boundaries of the fields are determined by man and are clearly delineated. They correspond to the threshold between wilderness and the field and represent human efforts to assert dominance in a given space. They also constitute legal boundaries which denote private ownership and exclusive privileges to exploit an area. Alfonso X, in his principal law code, the *Siete Partidas* (completed ca.1265), establishes punishments for those who change boundaries between fields without an order from the king or the judge of the district. For example, Partida VII, Title 14, Law 30 states that “si algunto contra esto ficiese mudando los mojones maliciosamente que estudiesen entre la su heredad e la de su vecino . . . que face furto” (III, 624)<sup>288</sup> (if anyone should violate this law, and maliciously move the landmarks between his land and that of his neighbor . . . he is guilty of larceny) (V: 1393).<sup>289</sup> Anyone found guilty of unlawfully changing boundary markers in order to increase his own land holdings must pay a fine of 50 *maravedis* of gold for every landmark that he has moved. He must return any lands he has encroached upon to the lawful owner and compensate him with a piece of his own land equal to the area he had tried to unlawfully appropriate. Lawful markers indicated the exclusive privilege to exploit fields or pastures within their bounds and Alfonsine jurists wanted to assure that citizens’ property rights were protected by the crown.

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<sup>285</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 129.

<sup>286</sup> In the most widely-known classic text on agriculture in medieval Europe, the *Opus Agriculturae* by Palladius, the cultivated field plays a central role. Palladius characterizes gardens, orchards, and cultivated fields as specialized zones of human control and gives advice on the natural qualities to look for when purchasing a plot of land. An Arabic treatise on agriculture from around 1085 by Ibn Bassāl, a botanist who lived in Toledo and Sevilla, circulated in medieval Spain and gives primary importance to the choice of fields according to soil conditions. Harlan, *The Living Fields* (see note 282), 5.

<sup>287</sup> Borlik, *Ecocriticism* (see note 18), 20 See also Johnson, “The Poetics of Waste” (see note 159).

<sup>288</sup> References to the *Siete Partidas* are from the 3 volume edition published by the Real Academia de la Historia. *Las Siete Partidas del Don rey Alfonso el Sabio, contejadas con varios códices antiguos por el Real Academia de la Historia* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1807).

<sup>289</sup> All translations from the *Siete Partidas* are from Robert Burns’s five-volume edition with Roman number indicating volume and Arabic number representing page. Robert J. Burns, S.J., *The Siete Partidas*, trans. Samuel Parsons Scott, 5 vols. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

All fields imply some degree of human intervention, specified boundaries, and constitute spaces defined in terms of human activity.<sup>290</sup> As previously noted, fields for agriculture or livestock are the most common type of fields depicted in literary works, examples of other types of fields also appear, including fields for recreation (gaming fields) or conflict (fields of battle and judicial combat). To examine the concept of the field as literary motif synonymous with the idea of nature tamed for humankind's benefit, I will cite examples from two collections of Marian miracle tales, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of Alfonso X (1257 '1283)<sup>291</sup> and Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, (ca.1260)<sup>292</sup> and then an example from the epic *Poema de Mio Cid* (1207) and the *Libro de Alexandre* (first half of the thirteenth century).

In the CSM and the MNS, any site where the Virgin appears or intervenes to help the faithful is imbued with spiritual grace as a miraculous space. Although many miracles in these collections occur in formal consecrated spaces such as a church, shrine, convent, or monastery, others occur in a variety of settings, both urban and rural. Holy Mary may appear at any time and in any place when called on by her devotees. Considering the importance of fields for crop cultivation and pasturing of livestock in the medieval economy it should not be surprising that fields figure prominently in many miracle stories. The Virgin intervenes to protect farmers and their crops and animals from disasters both natural and manmade. She also appears in other areas defined as fields, such as a gaming meadow or a battlefield.

Alfonso X's thirteenth-century collection of Marian miracles, the CSM, includes many examples of fields as bounded spaces where natural elements fall under human control. The poems distinguish between types of fields according to their use—vineyards (CSM 161 and 226), crops (CSM 178, 31, 289), irrigated field (CSM 133), gaming meadow (CSM 42), and battlefields (CSM 63 and 181). In addition to the poetic texts, two of the extant manuscripts of the CSM<sup>293</sup> also contain miniatures that depict the various types of fields specified. We can assume that artists working for Alfonso used not only information contained in the poems as a basis for their illustrations but also relied on their own first-hand knowledge of these kinds of fields in composing these miniatures.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Jaritz, "Natures Images" (see note 244), 54.

<sup>291</sup> Hereafter, CSM. All citations are from Walter Mettmann's three-volume edition of the CSM. All English translations are from the Kulp-Hill translation (see note 211).

<sup>292</sup> Hereafter, MNS.

<sup>293</sup> The Códice Rico (Escorial ms. T.I.1) and Florence ms. (Banco Rari 20).

<sup>294</sup> Keller and Cash have studied the miniatures of the CSM for clues to the realities of daily life in thirteenth-century Spain. John E. Keller and Annette Grant Cash, *Daily Life Depicted in the Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Studies in Romance Languages, 44 (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1998). Keller and Cast state that "It is clear that the miniaturists often decorated their illustrations

A field, precisely a vineyard, is central to the plot of *Cantiga 161* (Fig. 7). In this tale, a man of very modest means maintains his family by working his small vineyard. He is a great devotee of the Virgin of Salas and entrusts his welfare to her. The vineyard is his sole source of livelihood:

grande non era, daquesta se governava  
e ssa moller e seus fillos e vestia e calçava,  
ca outr' aver non avia no mundo, nen outr' eridade. (vv. 13–15)

[Although his was not large, he supported himself from it and clothed and shod his wife and children, for he had no other property nor legacy in the world] (196).

On a stormy August day, the man begs the Virgin to spare his field from any damage that might be caused by an impending hail storm. When large hail stones begin to pummel the land, they destroy all the vineyards in the area except the one belonging to the devout farmer/protagonist of this *cantiga*:

a pedra feriu mui de rrijo logo  
en toda-las outras vinnas, mais na sua, polo rogo  
que fez a Santa Maria, non tangeu par caridade. (vv. 28–30)

[The hail soon severely damaged all the other vineyards. However, because of the plea he made to Holy Mary, his was mercifully spared] (196).

The farmer perceives this event as a miracle bestowed on him by the Virgin since he had faithfully entrusted his vineyard to her safekeeping. The vineyard in this tale represents many of the attributes of the field as example of nature tamed for human benefit. It has legal boundaries which separate it from the vineyards worked by his neighbors and the revenue he earns from the grapes he grows there is essential for his well being and that of his family. The farmer recognizes his dependence on divine intervention to protect his crop and he is rewarded for his faith in the Virgin's ability to restrain the destructive powers of nature outside his control.

The protection of crops and other natural resources appropriated for one's livelihood and sustenance was also an especial legal preoccupation for Alfonso X, as evidenced in the *Siete Partidas*. In this lawcode, one of the responsibilities spelled out for the king is the wise management of his lands and fields. For example, *Partida 2*, Title XI, Law 3 states that the king should take care that "nin los árboles, nin las viñas, nin las otras cosas de que los homes viven, no las corten, nin las queman, nin las derraiguen nin las dañen de otra manera, nin aun por enemistad que hayan los unos contras los otros" (II, 93) (neither the trees, nor the vines, nor any of the other things upon which men subsist, are cut down, burnt,

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with animals and plants designed to provide attractive, realistic settings" (22).

uprooted, or injured in any way, or destroyed through the enmity which persons may entertain towards one another) (336). The king singles out grape vines as a particularly valuable commodity worthy of the king's protection. The law recognizes, too, that crops and other resources may be destroyed because of property or other disputes. Just as the narrative of *Cantiga 161* emphasizes the Virgin's power to protect fields from the vagaries of nature, the *Siete Partidas* deal with the very practical need to legally protect crops from man-made disasters.

Another vineyard figures prominently in the text and illustrations of *Cantiga 132*. In this tale, a young man is very devoted to the Virgin and promises to serve her faithfully. When his parents die, the young man inherits vineyards and orchards and he becomes quite wealthy from the income produced by his crops. His relatives urge him to marry so that he will have children to inherit his lands. He refuses all the women they propose but they finally present him with a rich, beautiful, and virtuous young woman whom he cannot refuse. On the day of his wedding, the groom first goes to the church to pray the hours of the Virgin as was his daily custom. While he is praying, he falls asleep and Mary visits him in a dream, upbraiding him for having deserted her to marry another woman. When he awakes he is quite disturbed but goes through with the marriage. However, when he goes to bed with his wife that evening he is physically unable to consummate the marriage. Realizing that the Virgin has intervened to keep him chaste, he abandons his wife and his properties to live the rest of his life in service to Holy Mary.

Although the text mentions both vineyards and orchards, the illustrations feature primarily the vineyard. In one of the six miniatures accompanying *Cantiga 132* the artists depict a vineyard, ripe with fruit and ready for harvest (Fig. 8). This miniature visually depicts the source of the young man's wealth and concern over who will inherit these valuable fields is the prime motivation for him to marry. The Alfonsine artists were obviously familiar with vineyards and realistically portrayed a field of well-tended vines. They were also aware that grapes were a valuable commodity and the need to secure one's legal rights to them in the future sets the plot of this tale in motion. This is one of several miracles in which the Virgin is presented as a jealous suitor of her devotees. Any practical concerns of the protagonist or his relatives about his valuable properties pales in comparison to a vow of exclusive service made to Holy Mary.

In another miracle, *Cantiga 178*, a plowed field ready for planting is clearly depicted in the third miniature accompanying the poetic text (Fig. 9). Even though the field is not as essential to the plot of this miracle tale as it was in *Cantigas 161* and *132*, the artists include a very realistic representation of a cultivated plot of land. The miniature shows a field cleared of most unwanted vegetation where a farmer and his oxen are plowing the soil in preparation for planting. A very similar view of a farmer at work in his fields is found in the second miniature of

*Cantiga 31* (Fig. 10). In this tale, a cow has escaped its enclosure and the farmer fears that it will be eaten by wolves or stolen by thieves outside the confines of the farmyard. In this narrative, the fenced pasture is portrayed as a place of safety for man and beast while the area outside its boundaries is seen as the domain of wild animals and of potential danger. The fear of theft, should the animal stray from its pasture, reinforces the idea that land outside the boundaries of the farm is a place where the rule of law does not apply. In *Cantiga 31*, the farmer's wife convinces him to pray to the Virgin of Villasirga to protect the cow that has strayed and bring her home safely. The farmer prays to Holy Mary and promises to give a gift to her church for her help in finding the lost animal. The cow returns to the safety of the farm where she is secured once again inside the fences of the pasture.

Wheat fields figure prominently in *Cantiga 289*,<sup>295</sup> which is illustrated in the Florence manuscript (without an accompanying poetic text) in six miniatures on folio 14r (Fig. 11). The text of the miracle is found in Escorial ms. B-I-2 and by collating the two manuscripts we have both a poetic and visual version of this tale. A farmer is reaping a ripe field of wheat on a hot summer day, specifically the day of Saints Quiricus and Julitta (celebrated on June 16).<sup>296</sup> The text specifies that he holds a sickle in his hand and wears a straw hat to protect himself from the intense summer sun. This is well illustrated in the miniatures found in the Florence codex where the ripe field clearly occupies a prominent space in two of the six of the miniatures. Because he is working on a feast day, God causes the farmer's hands to clench in such a way that he can let go neither of the sheaf of wheat he is holding nor of the sickle. In this paralyzed state he is carried to the church of Atocha in Madrid where he prays for the Virgin to relax his clenched fists. She forgives him, of course, and restores movement to his hands.

The wheat fields depicted in the miniatures of *Cantiga 289* attest to their value to the farmer and also show the hard physical labor needed to exact an income from this crop. If he is unable to harvest his wheat, the fields will go to seed, reverting to their natural state, and be useless as a food commodity for sale. We can safely assume that the artists' drawings of these fields reflect their personal knowledge of growing wheat since this crop was a staple of agricultural production throughout most of Europe.

*Cantiga 133* does not specifically mention a field in the poetic text but rather an irrigation system essential for watering crops. In this narrative, a young girl from

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<sup>295</sup> This *Cantiga* appears twice in the B.I.2 manuscript, as no. 289 and no. 396.

<sup>296</sup> Andrew Beresford pointed out to me that, following the logic of this *cantiga*, it would be sinful to work on any day of the year since almost all days are associated with one or more saints. I have been unable to discover what special significance the day of Saints Quiricus and Julitta, son and mother martyrs killed under Emperor Alexander in the year 230, have for the plot of this poem. See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* (see note 118), I: 323–24.

Elche tries to drink water from an irrigation ditch, falls in, and drowns. Her parents weep and implore the Virgin to restore their daughter to life. The Virgin hears the parents' desperate pleas and resuscitates the child who immediately begins to proclaim the miraculous power of Mary. The artists show a date palm growing alongside the irrigation ditch where the girl drowned (Fig. 12). The irrigation system is a prime example of human intervention in the natural world to ensure abundant crop production. Like the physical labors of the farmer harvesting his wheat fields as seen in *Cantiga* 289, the ditch in this *cantiga* required intense work in order to divert water to an otherwise arid piece of land. Although our attention is directed to the miracle of the resuscitated child, the careful attention the artists gave to the realistic portrayal of the ditch and the fields attests to their experience with such irrigation systems and the potential dangers associated with open trenches.

Another category of field featured in the texts and miniatures of the CSM is that of areas set aside for recreational purposes. For example, a gaming meadow plays a prominent role in *Cantiga* 42 (Fig. 13). This field is described as a cleared, grassy area in the "praça" (town square) where people of the town go for sport and recreation—"têer seu solaz" (v. 18) (to take their ease) (55). This is roughly equivalent to the village green or pitching green that still forms part of village life in many parts of Europe. The protagonist of *Cantiga* 42 is one of a group of young men who come to this "prado mui verd" (v. 17) (lush green park) (55) to play ball.<sup>297</sup> Because of reconstruction work being done on the nearby church, a statue of the Virgin Mary has been moved to the village green to protect it from damage. One of the ballplayers takes off a ring, given him by his fiancée, and places it on the Virgin's finger for safekeeping so he will not lose or damage it during the game. He is overcome by the statue's beauty and pledges to dedicate himself to the Virgin. At this point, the statue closes its finger on the ring as a way of indicating to the young man that Mary has taken seriously his proposal of devotion.<sup>298</sup> However, our young ballplayer soon forgets his vow to the Virgin and marries. On the wedding night, the Virgin appears to the groom and upbraids him for forgetting his promise to her. He becomes so frightened that he literally leaves the marriage bed and goes into the wilderness to lead the life of a hermit dedicated to Holy Mary.

There is a sharp contrast in both the narrative and the miniatures of this *cantiga* between the well-tended village green, where the young man spends time playing ball with his friends, and the wilderness where he eventually spends his life in

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<sup>297</sup> The green meadow as metaphor for the Virgin and her perpetual virginity should also be noted here.

<sup>298</sup> A variant of this tale was known in the pre-Christian era in which the young man places a ring on the finger of Venus and the goddess closes her fist around it.

complete isolation. The forest wilderness where he lives in a modest hut, as depicted in the last miniature, is dense with vegetation whereas the gaming field seen in the second of the six miniatures is a cleared space designed for sport and games. In the gaming field, he has his first encounter with the power of the Virgin and he sees the miracle of the statue closing its finger on his ring but he fails to recognize its implications. In the meadow, a man-made place for respite and recreation, his vision is limited. By marrying, he provokes the jealousy of the Virgin to whom he had promised himself. To regain Mary's good graces he must honor his vow to her and leave the confines of the town, go into the untamed wilderness, and remove himself from worldly distractions.

Fields in the CSM are also designated as sites of conflict between opposing armies. The battlefields are depicted as designated areas for armed combat, often delineated by natural or other borders where battle lines are clearly drawn. Battles usually occur near a city or castle which is the real object of protection or potential conquest. This is the case in *Cantiga 63* in which a knight who is part of the army defending San Esteben de Gormaz from the invading Moors under Almanzor is miraculously replaced in battle by the Virgin while he is attending mass in the town.<sup>299</sup> The field where the armies clash is clearly depicted in the miniatures accompanying this *cantiga* (Fig. 14). The scenes of the battlefield contrast with the interior views of the Virgin's church where the knight goes to pray, thus forming a dichotomy of exterior vs. interior with the former a place of conflict and bloodshed and the latter a refuge for prayer and reflection. The knight hears three masses while the battle rages. When he finally leaves the church the battle is over and he is congratulated for fighting so well. He finds his armor and shield damaged and battered and realizes that the Virgin had fought bravely in his place while he was at prayer. The third, fourth, and fifth of this *cantiga's* miniatures show the battle field, an area outside the walls of the town of San Esteban where the armies draw up their respective lines of offense and defense.

Another example of a battlefield and the contrast of interior/exterior space is featured in *Cantiga 181* (Fig. 15). This *cantiga* relates the siege of Marrakech by Aboyuçaf.<sup>300</sup> The king of Marrakech is forced to leave the safety of the urban area inside the city walls to secure and protect the outlying fields from enemy marauders who are taking all the lands around the city by force. An extremely interesting twist to this miracle narrative is that the Moorish king of Marrakech actually defeats the invaders because his army marches onto the field of battle

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<sup>299</sup> The poem refers to the battle for San Esteban de Gormaz that occurred in the year 989. Kulp-Hill, *Songs of Holy Mary* (see note 211), 80.

<sup>300</sup> This is Abu Yusuf Ya'qub, sultan of Fez, who ruled from 1258–1286. Kulp-Hill, *The Songs of Holy Mary* (see note 211), 205. The king of Marrakech at the time of this siege was Umar al-Murtada (1248–1266). Kulp-Hill, *The Songs of Holy Mary* (see note 211), 217.

under a flag of the Virgin Mary. As the text itself stipulates, the power of Holy Mary can be extended beyond the bounds of Christendom to aid those of another faith should she so choose: “E assi Santa Maria ajudou a seus amigos, / pero que d’outra lei eran, a britar seus emigos” (vv. 40–41) (Thus Holy Mary helped her friends, although they were of another faith, to defeat their enemies) (217). Of singular interest to this analysis is the visual depiction of the fields around Marrakech that the two armies battle to control. AboyuçaƆ knew that the best way to besiege the city and force its surrender was to destroy the fields that supply it. The king of Marrakech was aware also of the danger to his people should these farm and pasture lands fall into enemy hands. These fields become the site of battle and control of them will clearly indicate who will be the victor.

Gonzalo de Berceo, in the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (ca.1260), includes a miracle in which fields figure prominently—No. XI, “El labrador avaro” (The Greedy Farmer). In this tale, the farmer protagonist is introduced as particularly zealous in tending his fields: “usava la rreia más que otro lavor” (270b) (he did more plowing than any other labor) (62).<sup>301</sup> The text tells us that he loves his land more than God—“más amava la tierra que non al Criador” (270c) (he loved the land more than he did the Creator). The farmer commits a grievous sin (“una nemiga”) when he moves the boundary markers of his land in order to cultivate lands belonging to others as if they were his own. We are reminded that Alfonso X treats the crime of changing boundary lines in the *Siete Partidas* as a very serious crime and imposed stiff fines on those guilty of altering property markers. In Berceo’s text, the changing of the boundary stones is called “tuerto y falsedat” (271c) (injustice and deceit) (62). The poem also notes that the farmer had a bad reputation among his neighbors but, in spite of his greed and theft of others’ lands, he is very devoted to the Virgin. He always recites the Hail Mary at the beginning of the day before he goes into his fields to work. When the farmer dies, devils begin to torment his soul for the sin of having illegally appropriated and profited from land belonging to others. But a group of angels intervenes and struggles for his soul insisting that, despite his sins, the man had shown sincere devotion to the Virgin. At the mention of the name of Holy Mary, the devils release the farmer’s soul.

Of especial interest for our consideration of the fields in this narrative is the value placed on them and the need for respect of property boundaries. The farmer’s crime of modifying the boundary stones in order to cultivate land that was not his own is portrayed as such a heinous act that it would merit eternal

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<sup>301</sup> Translations are from Mount and Cash, *Miracles of Our Lady* in Jeanne K. Bartha, Annette Grant Cash, and Richard Terry Mount, *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation* (see note 133). References are to page numbers.

condemnation in hell had it not been for the redeeming power of the human devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Another work in which a field plays a prominent role is the *Poema de Mio Cid*. While fields in the two collections of Marian tales just considered have a variety of uses—agricultural, recreational, or military—the important field presented in the *PMC* is a legally-prescribed and delineated field of judicial combat. The boundaries of the field where the champions of the Cid meet the Infantes de Carrión after they dishonor the Cid's daughters are carefully demarcated and precisely controlled by the king and the legal dictates for the combat. A key feature of these fields is the *mojones* or boundary stones. Although the poem does not give the specific dimension of the fields marked by the *mojones*, the text specifies that all spectators are required to maintain a distance equivalent to “seis astas de lanças” (3609) (six lance poles) from the boundaries.<sup>302</sup>

Another interesting detail of the combat protocol is the fact that the two sides throw lots to see who will occupy which side of the field. In this way, fate determines which of the champions may be forced to look directly into the sun: “Sorteávanles el campo, ya les partién el sol” (3610) (They drew lots in the field to see who would face the sun). This detail of the preparation for judicial combat indicates a concern for fairness and a practical recognition that natural factors may influence the outcome of the conflict. Prominent boundary markers are erected to clearly indicate the space in which the men will fight. The *mojones* were especially important because one of the ways a combatant could be declared defeated was by crossing the boundary lines and fleeing the field of combat.<sup>303</sup> The concept of interior/exterior was of utmost importance in determining the winner of the combat.<sup>304</sup> Literally, the borders of the field will serve to indicate who will be vindicated and who will suffer the shame and guilt that accompanied defeat.

Each of the judicial battles (or *lides*) in the *PMC* has a different outcome. After having been wounded in combat by Pedro Vermúdez, one of the Cid's champions, the infante Fernando de Carrión declares: “¡Vençudo só!” (3644) (I am defeated). A verbal expression of one's defeat while still within the field was one way of determining the outcome of the combat since the defeated party openly, and in the presence of witnesses, admits that he has lost. When the next champion of the Cid, Martín Antolínez, fights with Diego de Carrión, Antolínez wounds him and the

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<sup>302</sup> According to Montaner, this represents a distance of approximately 20 meters. Since a defeated combatant might leave the field at full gallop, this distance was established to ensure that spectators were not trampled by the horse. Montaner, ed., *Cantar de Mio Cid* (see note 36), 212, fn. 3609.

<sup>303</sup> The two other ways one could be defeated was by publicly announcing one's surrender or being killed by one's opponent. See María Eugenia Lacarra, *El Poema de Mio Cid: Realidad histórica e ideológica* (see note 70), 93.

<sup>304</sup> On this point, see Pinet, “Para leer” (see note 32), 202.

Infante steers his horse outside of the boundary markers, thus indicating that he is defeated. In the third *lid*, Muño Gustioz severely wounds the older brother of the Infantes, Asur González. The father of the Infantes calls out to Muño Gustioz not to kill his son and the father declares Asur defeated, thus ending the fight. Again, a verbal admission of defeat—this time from the patriarch of the family—determines the legal victory of Muño Gustioz. Although the circumstances of each of the combats are somewhat different, each ends in defeat for the family of Carrión. While only one of the Infantes de Carrión, Diego, actually uses the boundary markers to save his life, the borders for these legal combats were an essential feature of these fields and were carefully prescribed by law and practice. This space within the boundary markers represented the civilized center where justice will prevail. The field of judicial combat is depicted as the opposite of the lands in the margins, outside of boundaries, e.g., the wild forest where the brutal attack on the Cid's daughters took place. The carefully measured field of combat becomes a public arena for determining justice and restoration of honor for the Cid and his daughters.

A field for individualized conflict is also described in the *Libro de Alexandre*. In the section on the Trojan War, Hector orders Paris and Menelaus to fight a duel. Paris had abducted Menelaus's wife, Helen, and rather than bring down the wrath of the entire Greek army on the Trojans, Hector ordered the two men to fight to decide who should have the lady. The Greek and Trojan armies agree to abide by the outcome. The two armies take up posts on opposing hills overlooking a valley where the combat will take place. In describing the field set aside for the duel, the Spanish poet introduces medieval elements into the scene.<sup>305</sup> In his source for the dueling incident, the *Ilias Latina*,<sup>306</sup> the setting for the combat is merely called a field but the *LA* introduces elements that would have been familiar to its readers/listeners. The field where Menelaus and Paris fight is described as “rico de mucha liebre e de mucho conejo” (475b) (richly stocked with many hares and rabbits) (189).

The duel itself is described in terms of a medieval tourney.<sup>307</sup> On horseback, the two combatants charge from opposite sides of the battlefield and strike each other so forcefully that their shields and lances shatter from the blow. The men then retreat each to his pre-determined side of the field to prepare themselves for the next assault. They draw their swords and, although Menelaus strikes first, his blow misses Paris's helmet and he drops his sword. The Spanish poet here introduces another of his Christianizing elements into the *LA*, asserting that God

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<sup>305</sup> Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material* (see note 171), 184.

<sup>306</sup> An abridged translation of the work of Homer composed in the first century AD. Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 115.

<sup>307</sup> Michael, *The Treatment of Classical Material* (see note 171), 184.

comes to Menelaus's aid at this point in the duel. In strophe 488, the poet mentions the Christian God twice:

Non sopo con la cueita Menalao qué fer,  
pero asmó un seso, que'l quiso Dios valer:  
que si'l pudiés la mano so el yelmo meter,  
con ayuda de Dios, que'l cuidarié vençer (488abcd)

[Menelaus, in dire straits, did not know what to do,  
but an idea came to him, for God wanted to help:  
that if he could get his hand beneath his helmet,  
with God's aid, he thought Paris could be defeated] (193).

In the source, Venus comes to Paris's aid, hiding him in a cloud and later breaking the straps of his helmet that Menelaus has taken hold of.<sup>308</sup> The Spanish version eliminates Venus altogether and has one of Paris's men intervene to free the Trojan from Menelaus's grasp. Since the Trojans had not abided by the initial terms for the conduct, the Greeks decide to attack in full force. The poet of the *LA* carefully describes the two armies engaged in full-pitched battle. He specifies that the Greek army drew up battle-lines outside of Troy with the intent of destroying the city and all its inhabitants. The Trojans decide to march out of the city and meet the Greeks in the field outside the wall. The dichotomy of inside/outside that we have seen before in descriptions of fields is applicable here. The area designated for the battle lies outside the city walls and any encroachment by the Greek army into the city of Troy itself would signal potential defeat for the Trojans. The field of battle runs red with blood, and the poet likens it to water flowing out of a spring:

así manava sangre tod'aquel arenal,  
como si fuesse prado o agua manantial (504cd)

[such that blood flowed over all the sands  
as though it were a water meadow or permanent spring] (195).

The Spanish poet describes the field for the honor duel between Menelaus and Paris and the larger area designated for the battle between the Greeks and Trojans in ways that helped his readers to visualize these spaces. He does not slavishly follow his source and adapts his depictions by introducing elements that would have been familiar to his medieval audience.

As we have seen, fields are areas dominated by people's taming of natural elements to serve their own needs. They have carefully determined boundaries which others are legally bound to respect. They also are contrasted with natural

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<sup>308</sup> Casas Rigall, *Libro de Alexandre* (see note 169), 257.

areas where human will does not hold sway such as the wilderness or the forest. Human beings decide the locale, extension, and use of fields. They serve such purposes as agriculture, animal husbandry, recreation, war, and judicial combat. Humans appropriate these spaces from the natural world in line with the Old Testament teaching giving them dominion over all of the earth and her creatures.<sup>309</sup> This idea of entitlement to use the land for human needs and to subject the natural world to people's will was also part of the teaching of St. Augustine who argued for the gradations of natural things based on their utility to people.<sup>310</sup> But, as Borlik points out, an exclusively anthropocentric view of human dominion over the land must take into account that even though Judeo-Christian scripture appears to sanction human beings' lordship over all creation, it also insists that all of God's creation is good and worthy of human respect and admiration.<sup>311</sup> Although in the examples we have seen, the utility of fields to humankind is the dominant feature, the authors and artists are faithful to their own and their readers' experience of establishing bounded areas. Cleared fields set aside for human endeavors signal dominance over nature in a specified plot of land, even if that dominance only is temporary since nature can reclaim the area if left unattended.

In the CSM, for example, fields appear as demarcated spaces set aside for purposes of agriculture, gaming, and battles. As part of the everyday life of the artists and poets working at Alfonso's court, the depictions of these fields are quite realistic. Even when miraculous events take place in these demarcated spaces, the fields and grounds retain an air of familiarity. In a sense, the artists of the CSM follow Aquinas's dictum "to put forth divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with material things."<sup>312</sup> Although Berceo's *MNS* is not an illustrated text, he relies on his audience's knowledge and appreciation of the field as private property and the need to respect legal boundaries. Fields as sites of economic production are paramount in his *Milagro XI* and wrongful appropriation of land is not only illegal but sinful. The legal and moral implications of the farmer's theft are central to the miracle's plot and establish the situation for the Virgin to intervene to save his soul.

Lands not designated for agricultural production or livestock use shared many of the same ideas associated with cultivated fields and pasture lands. Plots of land were also appropriated, at least temporarily, for gaming or warfare. These spaces

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<sup>309</sup> "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth'" (Genesis 1: 26).

<sup>310</sup> Moore, *Ecology and Literature* (see note 28), 58.

<sup>311</sup> Borlik, *Ecocriticism* (see note 18), 4.

<sup>312</sup> Moore, *Ecology and Literature* (see note 28), 60.

could be modified depending on need and do not carry the same strict legal demarcations recognized for privately-owned fields. An exception to this distinction, however, is found in the *PMC* where the designated field for combat between the Infantes de Carrión and the champions of the Cid is very precisely defined. Boundary markers for this type of field are legally determined and could have a direct impact on the judicial decision rendered as a result of the combats that take place within its limits. Within the boundaries of the field of combat, the dynamics of legality and restoration of honor are played out. The actions of the combatants in this specific field are key to the re-establishment of the Cid's honor, the prestigious second marriages of his daughters to the princes of Navarre and Aragón and, ultimately, to the Cid's stature as national hero. In the *LA* fields are set aside for individualized combat and for battles between armies. The field for the duel in this work is not as precisely delineated as the field of judicial combat in the *PMC* but it is clearly recognized as an area set aside for the fight between Menelaus and Paris. The battlefield outside the walls of Troy is also carefully described, and the Spanish poet adds details that his audience would have associated with their own experience of such fields.

As Rudd reminds us, most of our direct experiences with the natural world are in spaces such as fields or gardens, and it is not surprising that the field appears in these narratives as a sight familiar to both audience and compiler. Certain common notions about what constitutes a field are shared by all the works discussed. A field was seen as a finite space set aside and marked for a specific purpose. It is differentiated from wilderness or natural space beyond one's control because, within a field, human beings temporarily exercise control over part of their national environment and fashion it for their own purposes. A field is emblematic of humankind's spatial triumph over untamed nature. In these texts we also recognize that appropriation of natural spaces for human needs is given a nod of divine approval. Within the boundaries of the field, humans strive to control their environment and, with the help of God (or the Virgin), their endeavors may be rewarded.

## Part III – Nature Stylized

### Chapter Six – Spiritual *locus amoenus*: *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*

In the prologue to the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (ca.1260), Gonzalo de Berceo paints a picture of a new Garden of Eden where, through the graces of the Virgin Mary, we can enjoy the delights of Paradise.<sup>313</sup> The poet borrows the literary device of the *locus amoenus* common to classical rhetorical exercise and pastoral and courtly love poetry to convey his religious message. In analyzing depictions of nature in the prologue of the *Milagros*, I will show how Berceo adapts his literary model to include elements of his own experience of the natural world and present them in ways that convince the reader of the validity of the miracle tales he will relate. I disagree with critics, such as Curtius, who dismiss the natural world described by Berceo as nothing more than a variation on a familiar literary *topos*.<sup>314</sup> My approach is more closely aligned with the views of Chenu who argues for the (re)discovery of nature beginning in the twelfth century and states that the medieval “naturalistic view of the world went beyond mere poetic or rhetorical commonplaces . . . .”<sup>315</sup> Berceo and his audience were certainly aware of the poetic conventions for describing nature, as well as with Christian allegory, but they were also in touch with the natural world itself. My analysis will concentrate, not so much on the nature of the imagery of the prologue, but rather, on the image of nature Berceo presents there and what his work reveals about his relationship to the natural environment, as both physical and spiritual experience. As Borlik has

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<sup>313</sup> The ninth-century abbot of Fulda, Rabanus Maurus, in his encyclopedia *De Universo* compares the garden to the Church and claims that “the garden signifies the innermost joys of Paradise.” Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 27.

<sup>314</sup> Curtius claims that “Medieval descriptions of nature are not meant to represent reality.” Curtius, *European Literature* (see note 38), 183.

<sup>315</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little. 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 10.

pointed out the garden in literature invariably reflects the author's experience with the natural world which is "complexly inter-connected" with literary as well as environmental aesthetics.<sup>316</sup>

The central image of the *Milagro's* prologue—the green meadow—was a familiar natural setting to the work's readers and was also recognized as a variation on the *locus amoenus* as presented in literary texts. Berceo's contribution was to adapt a description of nature usually found in secular texts to present a religious allegory. There are several schools of critical thought, however, about the poet's sources for his allegory as well as its intent and utility to the collection. Numerous critics have pointed out the rural/agriculture motifs in Berceo's work as examples of a poet in touch with the everyday world around him and eager to communicate with a public also familiar with its natural surroundings.<sup>317</sup> At the same time, however, James Marchand contends that we should not consider Berceo's work outside the tradition of patristic exegesis and sapiential lore.<sup>318</sup> Juan Carlos Bayo agrees with Marchand and affirms that the allegorical description of the *locus amoenus* in the prologue to the *Milagros* is not directly based on classical models of allegory but on the tradition of Biblical exegesis.<sup>319</sup> Josefa Salmón views the *prado* described in Berceo's prologue in terms of Foucault's concept of *episteme*:

La estructura del 'prado' en la obra de Berceo, opera bajo lo que llama Foucault el 'episteme' de la analogía. El pasaje refleja una realidad sagrada por medio de la alegoría, ya que no se puede ver directamente lo sagrado . . . El paisaje entonces, funciona como recurso para reflejar el espacio del paraíso, y en él, la Virgen Gloriosa.<sup>320</sup>

[The structure of the 'meadow' in the work of Berceo, operates under what Foucault calls the 'episteme' of analogy. The landscape reflects a sacred reality by means of allegory, since one can not directly see the divine . . . The landscape then functions as a recourse to reflect the space of paradise and the Glorious Virgin in it.]<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> *Ecocriticism* (see note 18), 20–21.

<sup>317</sup> See especially Dutton, Capuano, and Gerli, "Poet and Pilgrim."

<sup>318</sup> James W. Marchand, "Berceo and the Learned: The *Ordo Prophetarum* in the *Loores de Nuestra Señora*," *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 31.3 (1984): 291–304; here 293.

<sup>319</sup> Julián Carlos Bayo, "La alegoría en el prólogo de los *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*," *Las metamorfosis de la alegoría: Discurso y sociedad en la Península Ibérica desde la Edad Media hasta la Edad Contemporánea*, ed. Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida and Rosa Vidal Dovel (Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2005), 51–69; here 51–52.

<sup>320</sup> Josefa Salmón, "El paisaje en Berceo, Garcilaso y Balbuena: tres concepciones del universo," *Prismal/Cabral: Revista de Literatura Hispánica/Caderno Afro-Brasileiro Asiático Lusitano* 7–8 (1982): 57–73; here 59.

<sup>321</sup> Prat Ferrer agrees with Salmón although he does not use Foucault to frame his argument: "El narrador . . . saca a su público del lugar inmediato donde se halla para transportarlo a una esfera diferente de la realidad; en esta esfera lo milagroso es parte de lo cotidiano y es aquí donde el público entra en contacto con la Gloriosa" (The narrator . . . removes the audience from where they

Lappin agrees that the meadow of the prologue evokes paradise and asserts that Berceo used this image as the centerpiece for his allegory because he composed the work shortly before his death when he was longing for eternal rest from all his labors.<sup>322</sup> Also, since Berceo's work is essentially didactic, Bayo and Michael contend that he chose an allegory based on a *locus amoenus* since meadows or gardens were frequent mnemonic devices.<sup>323</sup>

The meadow of the prologue, with its trees, birds, flowers, etc., was familiar to Berceo's public as part of the natural world and the literary world. Nature, as well as art, was a means to understand the divine and Berceo exploits both in his collection of Marian miracles.<sup>324</sup> I disagree with Carlos Foresti who argues that Berceo's poetry never reflects natural realities but rather approaches nature by means of abstract integration divorced from any direct observation of the physical world.<sup>325</sup> While undoubtedly Berceo was well-versed in the monastic exercise of Biblical exegesis and well-schooled in the rhetoric of allegory, I do not believe that he composed his poetry without any reliance on physical observations of nature. Textual evidence indicates that he carefully selected certain elements from nature for his prologue knowing that they would be familiar to both a learned and a non-monastic public. Through the use of allegory, he does not divorce himself from the realities of nature but molds this natural world, a reflection of God's glory, for esthetic and devotional purposes.

Most critics divide the prologue to the *Milagros* into four distinct sections.<sup>326</sup> The first is comprised of verses 1–15 in which the narrator identifies himself as Gonzalo de Berceo, a pilgrim, who arrives at a paradisiacal meadow which he describes in great detail. In the second part, verses 16–30, the narrator explains the meaning of the meadow and the natural elements that compose it. The third part, verses 31–41, is devoted entirely to the flowers in the meadow, each representing a name, or epithet, applicable to the Virgin Mary. The fourth section, verses 42–46, is a transition to the miracle narratives themselves in which the poet announces that the fruit trees of the meadow represent the miracles he is about to relate. Jesús

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find themselves at that moment to transport them to a different sphere of reality; in this sphere the miraculous is part of the everyday and it is here that the audience comes into contact with the Virgin). Juan José Prat Ferrer, "El marco en los *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* de Gonzalo de Berceo," *eHumanista* 9 (2007): 83–109; here 99. Last accessed on August 16, 2012.

<sup>322</sup> Anthony John Lappin. *Gonzalo de Berceo: The Poet and his Verses*, Colección Támesis, Serie A: Monografías, 268 (Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2008), 131.

<sup>323</sup> Gonzalo de Berceo, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, ed. Juan Carlos Bayo and E. Ian Michael. Clásicos Castalia, 288 (Madrid: Castalia, 2006), 38.

<sup>324</sup> For Augustine, all of nature contained the hidden workings of God, all in nature was potentially miraculous. Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000–1215*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>325</sup> Foresti, "Esquemas" (see note 130), 5.

<sup>326</sup> For example, Gimeno Casalduero and Bayo.

Montoya describes these sections in terms of classical rhetoric: the first section corresponds to the “narratio,” the second is devoted entirely to “expositio allegorica,” the third is a pleasant “digressio,” and the fourth transitional section is the “proposition.”<sup>327</sup>

In the first section (“narratio”) Berceo positions himself within the text as its pilgrim/narrator:

Yo, maestro Gonçalvo de Verçeo nomnado,  
iengo en rromería caeçi en un prado  
verde y bien sençido, de flores bien poblado,  
logar cobdiçiaduoero pora omne cansado (2abcd).<sup>328</sup>

[I, Master Gonzalo de Berceo,  
while on pilgrimage, happened to pause in a meadow  
green and untouched, full of flowers—  
a desirable place for a weary man] (21).<sup>329</sup>

Michael Gerli finds Berceo’s posture as narrator/fellow-pilgrim central to a reading of the prologue and asserts that the author’s stance makes his description of the meadow more than a simple evocation of the *locus amoenus*: “Berceo . . . se identifica estrechamente con este concepto [de *peregrinatio vitae*] y se convierte en *homo viator*, el hombre caído que anda en busca de la gracia perdida. La entrada de este narrador al *prado bien sencido, de flores bien poblado* . . . es mucho más, pues, que la evocación de un simple *locus amoenus*: representa el retrono del narrador ejemplar, el *everyman* y yo poético, al Paraíso perdido.”<sup>330</sup> (Berceo . . . closely identifies with the concept of the pilgrimage of life and becomes a traveler, a fallen man in search of lost grace. The entrance of this narrator into the intact meadow, populated with many flowers . . . is much more than the evocation of a simple *locus amoenus*: it represents the return of the exemplary narrator, the everyman and the poetic I, to Paradise lost).<sup>331</sup>

I quote Gerli at length here because I agree that the narrator/pilgrim posture adopted by Berceo contributes to a more nuanced reading of the prologue rather than viewing it simply as another example of the *locus amoenus* motif. I also agree

<sup>327</sup> Jesús Montoya Martínez, “El Prólogo de Gonzalo de Berceo al Libro de los *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*,” *La corónica* 13.2 (1985): 175–89; here 180.

<sup>328</sup> This and all subsequent quotes are from the edition by Bayo and Michael published in the series *Clásicos Castalia* in 2006. The references are to verse numbers (see note 323).

<sup>329</sup> All translations are from *Las Milagros de Nuestra Señora* are from the Cash and Mount translation included in Jeannie K. Bartha, Annette Grant Cash, and Richard Terry Mount, *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation*. (see note 133). All references in text are to page numbers.

<sup>330</sup> E. Michael Gerli, “La tipología bíblica y la introducción a los *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 62 (1985): 7–14; here 9.

<sup>331</sup> The relationship between Berceo’s meadow and the Garden of Eden has been studied by many critics, including Foster, Gerli, Foresti, Burke, Salmón, and Montoya.

with Bayo who states that Berceo's use of a pilgrim who stops along the way to rest in a shady spot helped to make his doctrinal content more accessible to his audience.<sup>332</sup> Likewise, Gerli speaks about the importance, not only of Berceo as the pilgrim/narrator, but also, of the probable pilgrim audience for the *Milagros*: "The narrator acquires both credibility and authority by becoming a pilgrim addressing pilgrims."<sup>333</sup> Berceo inserts himself within the text both as pilgrim actor and composer/narrator and it is his voice we hear as he describes the meadow and later explains its allegorical meanings.<sup>334</sup>

This first section of the prologue includes a description of the meadow, the flowers growing there, and their fragrances. The place is fed by four springs which are cold in summer and warm in winter. Next the poet describes the fruit trees that populate the meadow, specifically pomegranate, fig, pear, and apple.<sup>335</sup> The fruits of these trees never spoil and are never sour. Gerli clearly identifies this description with the Garden of Eden as inspired by the Genesis myth.<sup>336</sup> And Foresti sees Berceo's description as nothing more than a nature typified and constructed by means of an enumeration of pleasant elements—paradise as man imagines it to be.<sup>337</sup> While the influence of the Paradise of Genesis on Berceo's prologue cannot be denied, I do not believe that we can explain away the description of its natural elements solely in terms of another Eden. By carefully examining the elements of nature in this scene I hope to avoid seeing them as either (1) mere copies taken from a literary/artistic stereotype or, (2) existing only to serve the allegory with no intrinsic or esthetic value of their own.

The four springs present in the meadow, one in each of the cardinal directions, are reminiscent of the four rivers of Paradise as described in Genesis 1: 11–14.<sup>338</sup> But Berceo does not associate specific lands with the springs as does the description of the rivers found in Genesis or ascribe any special properties to

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<sup>332</sup> Bayo, "La alegoría" (see note 319), 56–57.

<sup>333</sup> E. Michael Gerli, "Poet and Pilgrim: Discourse, Language, Imagery, and Audience in Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*," *Hispanic Medieval Studies in Honor of Samuel G. Armistead*, ed. E. Michael Gerli and Harvey L. Sharrer (Madison, WI: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1992), 139–51; here 141. Gerli also points out that, in addition to the pilgrim/narrator of the prologue, many of the miracle tales contained in Berceo's collection have pilgrims as protagonist or depict pilgrims as part of their plots. "Poet and Pilgrim," 142.

<sup>334</sup> On this point, see also Prat Ferrer, "El marco" (see note 321), 87–88.

<sup>335</sup> Curtius contends that the meadow, streams or springs, birds, and flowers are no more than rhetorical devices and dismisses any other reading of these phenomena. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (see note 38), 202.

<sup>336</sup> Gerli, "La tipología" (see note 330), 9. Howard Patch asserts that the pattern for describing Paradise was firmly established in medieval literatures. *The Other World* (see note 92), 144.

<sup>337</sup> Foresti, "Esquemas" (see note 130), 9.

<sup>338</sup> Gerli, "La tipología bíblica" (see note 330), 9. "A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers" (Genesis 2:10).

them.<sup>339</sup> The springs that water the meadow are described simply as “claras” (clear) and “corrientes” (running) (3c). Springs would be a natural phenomenon in a fertile meadow whereas four major rivers, such as those described in Genesis, imply a much larger expanse of land. The springs water the many fruit-bearing trees that thrive in the meadow. Among the trees mentioned is the apple tree which is associated with Eve’s sin in the Biblical tradition and also with temptation and sensuality in classical literature.<sup>340</sup> These associations come into play later in the prologue, in strophe 15, when Berceo specifies that if Adam had eaten of the sweet and delicious fruit of the trees in this meadow, neither he nor Eve would have been deceived by the devil:

El fructu de los árboles era dulz e sabrido;  
 si don Adam oviesse de tal fructu comido,  
 de tan mala manera non serié deçebido,  
 nin tomaríen tal danno Eva ni so marido (15abcd).

[The fruit of the trees was sweet and delicious;  
 if Adam had eaten such fruit,  
 he would not have been so badly deceived.  
 Neither Eve nor her husband would have suffered such harm!] (23)

The other trees specified in strophe four of the prologue also deserve analysis. The apple, although it has been the object of most critical commentary, is actually mentioned last in the sequence of trees. The pomegranate is the first, enjoying a rich symbolic history since classical times. In Greek mythology, the pomegranate sprung forth from the blood of Dionysus, and in Roman mythology it symbolized the seasonal return to the earth in spring. Also, because of its internal structure, the pomegranate was used to represent the universe, and in Christian symbolism it is associated with the Church because of the internal unity of its many seeds in a single fruit.<sup>341</sup> Thus, in this meadow representing the Virginity of Mary, the first tree to be mentioned is the pomegranate, symbol of both fertility and Christian unity, aptly associated with Mary as mother of Christ and Christ as the head of the Church. Berceo is relying on a rich iconographic history of the pomegranate tree to begin a litany of trees, all of which were familiar to his audience as literary symbols and natural realities.

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<sup>339</sup> “The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which flows around the land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates” (Genesis 2: 11–14).

<sup>340</sup> Enzo Franchini, *El manuscrito y la lengua y el ser literario de la Razón de Amor* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1993), 270.

<sup>341</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 229.

The next tree mentioned is the fig tree. Together with the olive tree and grapevines, the fig tree is also mentioned frequently in the Bible. In Genesis 3:7, after eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve sew fig leaves together to hide their nakedness. In the Song of Songs, the singer beckons to his bride when “the fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom” (2:13). In the New Testament, Jesus curses a fig tree which produces no fruit (Matthew 21:19). And, since antiquity, the fig, because of its many seeds, has been an anthropogenic symbol with nutritious properties as well as a symbol of fertility. Once again Berceo chooses a tree associated with both the origins of mankind and fertility, appropriate for his larger purpose of emphasizing the Virgin’s role in the plan of salvation. He also chooses trees, such as the fig and the olive that would have been familiar to his audience as two of the most common trees found in the Mediterranean world.

Third in the list of trees is the pear. In Christian iconography the pear is associated with Christ Incarnate and with his love for humanity.<sup>342</sup> Given that Christ owed his incarnate nature to his mother, again, the poet’s choice is a purposeful one. Since the fruits of all the trees will be allegorically linked to the Virgin’s miracles, it is significant that all of them have strong symbolic and iconographic ties to the central miracle of Christianity, i.e., God made man in the person of Jesus through the obedience of his mother, Mary. Skipping ahead to Berceo’s allegorical explanation of the trees in the meadow, the poet states that the shade given by these trees also represents the Virgin’s prayers on our behalf.<sup>343</sup> The poet is mindful of the associations these trees will produce and he carefully names them, not as a mere pastiche of *locus amoenus* motifs, but as part of a broader picture of the Virgin’s power and grace.<sup>344</sup>

Our pilgrim/narrator in the Prologue is so overcome by the beauty, the fragrant smells, and the welcoming shade of the meadow that he stops to enjoy his surroundings. All his senses are entertained and he becomes aware of the beautiful songs of the birds. Gimeno Casaldueiro points out that a pilgrim who allows himself to be diverted from his journey by the enchantments of this world is unexpected. Since, in the Christian tradition, the beauties and delights of this

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<sup>342</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 345.

<sup>343</sup> La sombra de los árboles buena, dulz e sanía,  
en qui ave rrepaire toda la rromería,  
sí son las oraciones que faz Santa María  
que por los peccadores ruega noche e día (23abcd).

[The shade of the trees, good, sweet and healthful,  
in which all pilgrims take respite  
indeed are the prayers that Holy Mary says,  
She who prays for sinners day and night] (24).

<sup>344</sup> On this point, see Gerli, “La tipología bíblica” (see note 330), 9.

world are considered distractions on one's journey towards the goal of Paradise, this critic contends that Berceo explicitly explains the allegorical meaning of the pilgrim stopping to rest and enjoy the delights of the meadow in terms of Marian devotion.<sup>345</sup> While Gimeno Casaldueiro makes an interesting observation, I believe he overlooks Berceo's emphasis on the sensual pleasures and refreshment that one finds in his carefully-configured meadow. Berceo wants his readers/listeners to stop with him and enjoy the sheer delight that comes from reading tales that recount the miracles Holy Mary works on behalf of the faithful. This pilgrim, in the guise of Berceo himself, is at ease in this natural landscape which he paints on both a literal and allegorical level as a pleasant place to learn more about the goodness and the mercy of the Virgin.

The songs of the birds are described in musical terms with some singing the fifth while others sing harmony or the basic melody. Their songs are superior to the sounds produced by any man-made instruments:

Non serié organista nin serié violero,  
 nin giga, nin psalterio, nin mano de rrotero,  
 nin estrument nin lengua, nin tan claro vozero,  
 cuyo canto valiesse con esto un dinero (9abcd).

[There was no organist, *vilhuela* player,  
 nor *giga*, psaltery, or *rota*-player's hand  
 nor other instrument, or tongue, or so clear a voice  
 whose song would be worth a penny in comparison] (22).<sup>346</sup>

Nature trumps the musician, no matter how talented he or she may be at playing an instrument. And the poet finishes this description announcing that he has only been able to relate in words a tenth of the actual pleasure that his time in the meadow brings him. But he continues to try, saying that another virtue of the meadow is that neither heat nor cold affects its beauty because it is always lush and green. Stretched out under the trees, our pilgrim/poet is freed from all suffering, worries, and burdens. He sums up his experience by likening his surroundings to Paradise, as previous images have anticipated: "Semeia esti prado equal de Paráyso" (14a) (This meadow seemed like Paradise).<sup>347</sup> According to

<sup>345</sup> Joaquín Gimeno Casaldueiro, "Función de una alegoría: los *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* y la romería de Berceo," *Mester* 17.2 (1988): 1–12; here 3–4.

<sup>346</sup> Mount and Cash explain that the *vilhuela*, *giga*, and *rota* are all stringed instruments. The *vilhuela* is similar to a guitar, the *giga* is a type of viola, and the *rota* is a kind of harp. *Collected Works* (see note 133), 22, n.2.

<sup>347</sup> On this point see Gerli, "La tipología bíblica" (see note 330), 10. Also, James Burke, "The Ideal of Perfection: The Image of the Garden-Monastery in Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*," *Medieval, Renaissance and Folklore Studies in Honor of John Esten Keller*, ed. Joseph R. Jones (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta 1980): 29–38; here 33. And, Salmón, "El paisaje" (see note 320), 62.

David Foster, in the prologue to the *Milagros*, “the garden of Eden is fulfilled, not by the Gethsemane of the exegetical figural tradition, but by the Virgin.”<sup>348</sup> Thus, before offering the *glosa* or the “*expositio allegorica*,” Berceo invites his audience to consider the meadow’s similarities to Paradise and the Virgin as a pre-lapsarian being who is all goodness and beneficence.

The second section of the prologue, the explanation of the allegory of the meadow, begins with strophe 16. Berceo admits that his description thus far has been an obscure parable—“*palavra es obscura*”—(16b)<sup>349</sup> and that he now intends to explain its meaning. Even though the poet uses the familiar metaphor of discarding the husk—“*corteza*” (16c)—to reveal the kernel—“*meollo*” (16c)—or the real meaning, in fact, the natural elements that comprise the “*corteza*” remain intact. They are not discarded as the poet says he intends to do: “*prendamos lo de dentro, lo de fuera dessemos*” (16d) (Let us take what is within, and what is without let us leave aside) (23). The allegorical explanation of the meadow and its birds, trees, and springs does not eliminate them from the picture as strophe 16 would lead the reader/listener to believe, but rather, adds layers of meaning to them. Berceo is, of course, following the model of St. Augustine who advocated using allegory to make visible the invisible or, in other words, to explain the mysteries of the faith using the familiar.<sup>350</sup>

Prat Ferrer believes that when Berceo begins to explain the *locus amoenus* he had presented in the first 15 strophes of the poem he destroys any illusion of verisimilitude of the place described.<sup>351</sup> In a similar vein, Salmón asserts that the vision of the landscape as a sacred place used to reflect the divine makes it impossible to see nature empirically; the natural world ceases to exist autonomously of its relation to the symbolic.<sup>352</sup> I disagree with Prat Ferrer and Salmón because Berceo does not discard the natural elements in the meadow when he offers his allegorical explanation, but retains them as tangible reminders of the Virgin’s grace. The beauty of the meadow and its power to nurture and refresh the pilgrim assume allegorical meanings without diminishing the poet’s delight in the natural world as evident in his initial descriptions.

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<sup>348</sup> Foster, *Christian Allegory* (see note 100), 123.

<sup>349</sup> Parable is the translation that Mount and Cash give to “*palavra*” in *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation* (see note 133). In the *Tentative Dictionary of Medieval Spanish*, the meaning provided for “*palavra*” as it appears here in verse 16b is “*consejo, advertencia*” (520) but one of the ten possible meanings for “*palavra*” in the *Tentative Dictionary* is “*parabola*” (521). Also, Tomás Antonio Sánchez in the first modern edition of the *Milagros* published in 1780 refers to the prologue as a parable. Bayo points out that the use of the word, parable, was synonymous in the eighteenth century with what today we call allegory. “*La alegoría*” (see note 319), 51.

<sup>350</sup> Gimeno Casalduero, “*Función*” (see note 345), 5.

<sup>351</sup> Prat Ferrer, “*El marco*” (see note 321), 99.

<sup>352</sup> Salmón, “*El paisaje*” (see note 320), 62.

In strophes 17 and 18, Berceo explicitly speaks about the pilgrimage of life and affirms that we are all, including himself, pilgrims on the road through life pursuing the goal of eternal life in the celestial Paradise. He sums up this metaphor in the following verses:

la nuestra rromería estonz la acabamos  
quando a Paráyso las almas enviamos" (18cd).

[Our pilgrimage, then, we finish  
when we send our souls to Paradise] (23).<sup>353</sup>

Gerli notes that, by including himself with his audience as a fellow pilgrim on the journey of life, Berceo "aspires to trespass the limits of fiction and become actualized and integrated into the common experience of the poet and his audience. It is no accident, then, nor is it simply an appeal to a typological image, but rather a clever story-telling stratagem that leads Berceo to employ a narrative voice and wear a narrative mask matching his listeners' identity."<sup>354</sup> Berceo does not differentiate himself from his audience and his enjoyment of the meadow is shared by his listeners who identify with him and share his appreciation of the pleasant natural setting he describes.

Berceo begins his allegorical explanations by interpreting the meaning of the meadow itself. In verse 19c, the meadow, introduced in verse 2d as a place of rest for any "omne cansado," (weary man), is equated with the "la Virgin gloriosa" (the glorious Virgin) and a place where all pilgrims find repose (19b). The central idea of the allegory equates the experience of physical respite with spiritual repose as represented by the Virgin.<sup>355</sup> The allegorical meaning of the pleasant meadow in no way distracts from its initial description as a place of rest with which any exhausted traveler could easily identify.

In strophe 11, we learn that the green lushness of the meadow is not affected by cold, heat, or storm. Now, in strophe 20, Berceo says that the perennial greenness of the meadow represents the inviolate virginity of Mary. He incorporates Latin phrases which would have been familiar to both clerics and lay people alike into his description of Mary: "post partum et in partu fue virgin de verdat, / ilea incorrupta en su entegredat" (20cd) (after giving birth to Christ and during His birth She truly was a virgin / undefiled, incorrupt in Her integrity) (23). The perpetual virginity of Mary was upheld in the third canon of the Lateran Council held in the time of Pope Martin I, C.E. 649.<sup>356</sup> However, the doctrine is

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<sup>353</sup> The poet gives his source for the metaphor of the pilgrimage of life as the writings of St. Peter. See 1 Peter 2:11.

<sup>354</sup> Gerli, "Poet and Pilgrim" (see note 333), 142.

<sup>355</sup> Foresti, "Esquemas" (see note 130), 10.

<sup>356</sup> www.newadvent.org. Last assessed on August 16, 2012.

documented in the earlier clerical writings of many of the Church Fathers and especially in St. Jerome's treatise against Helvidius which appeared in C.E. 383.<sup>357</sup> The inviolate virginity of Mary was also a central tenet of the apocryphal Gospel, *Protevangel of James*.<sup>358</sup> Berceo relies on a theological tenet, upheld both in popular belief and in clerical writing, at the outset of his allegorical explanation. He reminds his audience that Mary's singularity will form the cornerstone upon which the rest of the allegorical explanation will be based and on which our faith in her miraculous powers rests.

In the following strophe, Berceo likens the four springs that irrigate the meadow to the four evangelists and claims that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John spoke with Mary as they composed their accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This assertion that Mary was an active participant in the writing of the gospels as their editor and guide is not usually found as part of Christian theology.<sup>359</sup> But, in the allegorical explanation, she is the source of the waters of the gospels (i.e., the springs) which carried the truth of the Christian message: "el riego todo d'Ella manava" (22c) (She was the source from which all waters flowed) (24).

The shade afforded by the trees where the pilgrim takes his rest is the prayers that Mary offers constantly on behalf of all sinners. This explanation in strophe 23 harkens back to the image in strophe 7 when the pilgrim under the shade trees feels relieved of all his worldly cares: "perdí todos cuidados" (7a) (I forgot all my cares) (22). The trees themselves are the miracles wrought by the Virgin which are "mucho más dulces que azúcar sabrosa" (25c) (much sweeter than the delicious sugar) (24). As with the pilgrim/protagonist identified as author, here Berceo includes another internal reference to the miracle accounts he is offering to the

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<sup>357</sup> Among the writings on the perpetual virginity of Mary, see the following:

- St. Irenaeus (III, 21; see Eusebius, Church History V.8)
- Origen (Adv. Cels., I, 35),
- Tertullian (Adv. Marcion., III, 13; Adv. Judæos, IX)
- St. Justin (Dialogue with Trypho 84)
- St. John Chrysostom (Hom. v in Matth., n. 3; in Isa., VII, n. 5)
- St. Epiphanius (Hær., xxviii, n. 7)
- Eusebius (Demonstrat. ev., VIII, i)
- Rufinus (Lib. fid., 43)
- St. Basil (in Isa., vii, 14; Hom. in S. Generat. Christi, n. 4, if St. Basil be the author of these two passages)
- Sts. Jerome and Theodoretus (in Isa., vii, 14)
- St. Isidore (Adv. Judæos, I, x, n. 3)
- St. Ildefonsus (De perpetua virginit. s. Mariæ, iii). ([www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org), last accessed on August 16, 2012)

<sup>358</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 47.

<sup>359</sup> On the unorthodox nature of theology in Berceo, see Joël Saugnieux, *Berceo y las culturas del siglo XIII* (Logroño: Servicio de Cultura de la Excma. Diputación Provincial, 1982).

reader/listener. In a sense, Berceo, as author, plants the trees which are the miracle stories that, in turn, produce the shade, symbol of the grace of the Virgin, to be enjoyed by those who read about her miraculous deeds. The birds, whose songs are described as sweeter than any music produced by man-made instruments in strophes 7–9, are specifically named in the allegorical explanation in strophe 26. The birds are St. Augustine,<sup>360</sup> St. Gregory and other fathers of the Church whose clerical writings about the Virgin are the sweet songs they sing. Berceo claims that each one of these authors wrote about Mary in his own way but that they all shared a firm belief in her holiness.

In verse 28c, Berceo turns to the prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah,<sup>361</sup> and claims that their prophecies about the Virgin are sweeter than the singing of nightingales or larks. Joining with the voices of the Church fathers, and the prophets are those of the apostles, confessors, martyrs and holy virgins in strophe 29. All of these beautifully sang the praises of the Virgin. Berceo places himself within a larger group of holy men and women who have proclaimed, throughout the ages, the goodness of Mary. By penning his *Milagros*, he is continuing a long-standing tradition of Marian devotion.<sup>362</sup>

The final strophe in this section of the prologue states that all the clergy pay homage to Mary daily by singing her praises and he again likens the voices of the faithful to the songs of nightingales. Nightingales are one of the birds most often named in poetry and they are usually viewed as harbingers of news that arrives from afar or from another world and they are also seen as good omens.<sup>363</sup> This is a perfect bird to associate with the praise of the Virgin who is the vessel through which the good news of Christ's birth arrives to humanity from Heaven. And certainly the salvation of the world through Christ is the best of all omens for fallen mankind.<sup>364</sup> The poet's earlier mention of the lark is also significant because the lark flies very high and only sings when it is flying upwards. This singing as the bird wings its way heavenward was seen in Christian symbolism as a sign of love, charity, and humility and as a metaphor for the songs of the clergy who also lift up their voices in praise to God on high.<sup>365</sup> The poet again incorporates himself into his text, as one of the singing clergy who daily praise the Virgin. His specific mention of the nightingale and the lark readily provoked Christian associations for his audience who would want to emulate their sweet songs of praise for Mary.

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<sup>360</sup> Augustine penned a treatise about Mary's virginity entitled *On Holy Virginity* ([www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org)). Last accessed on August 16, 2012.

<sup>361</sup> Especially Isaiah 7:14 in which he prophesizes the birth of the savior.

<sup>362</sup> On this point see Montoya, "El prólogo" (see note 327), 179.

<sup>363</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 376.

<sup>364</sup> Gerli, "La tipología bíblica" (see note 330), 8.

<sup>365</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 57.

In the next ten strophes, or third section, of the prologue, Berceo turns to the flowers growing in the meadow. These are the many names and epithets given to the Virgin. Montoya calls this section a “digressio,” an elegant form of *amplificatio* common among medieval writers.<sup>366</sup> This part of the prologue is a virtual litany of phrases applied to Holy Mary, some more common than others. After announcing in strophe 31 that the flowers are names of the Virgin, he gives fifteen examples in strophes 32–37, most accompanied by a brief explanation. The first name is “estrella de los mares,” (32b)<sup>367</sup> (Star of the Seas) (17), a sure guide for lost sailors. In rapid succession, we find a host of appellations associated with Mary: Queen of Heaven (33a), Temple of Jesus Christ (33b), Morning Star (33b), Natural Mistress (33c), Merciful Neighbor (33c), and Health and Cure of Body and Soul (33d). Next the poet makes a specific reference to the tale of Gideon’s fleece found in the Old Testament book of Judges 6:36–40.

In this story, Gideon tests God twice to assure himself that God intends him to lead the Israelites against the Midianites. First he puts a woolen fleece on the ground at night and asks God to let dew form only on the fleece and not on the ground around it as a sign that he is to lead his people. The next morning only the fleece is damp with dew while the surrounding ground is completely dry. On the following night Gideon asks the Lord to do the reverse, i.e., to keep the fleece dry while the ground around it is wet. The next morning the fleece is dry and the surrounding ground damp. Gideon’s fleece, according to medieval Biblical exegesis, prefigured the conception of Christ by the Holy Spirit since, just as the fleece remained dry when the ground was wet and vice versa, Mary remained perpetually virginal, untouched by the forces of nature, by the will of God.<sup>368</sup> In the same strophe, Mary is likened to the sling with which David slew the giant.<sup>369</sup> She is the instrument of our salvation against all foes because she brought us Christ through whom sinners are redeemed and sin is brought low.

In strophe 35, the Virgin is the fountain from which we all drink, the food that nourishes us, the port to which we are drawn, and the gate to the entrance to Paradise. Continuing the line of Old Testament exegesis, the fountain is reminiscent of the fountain in the garden described in the Song of Songs 4:15 which prefigures the fountain of everlasting life guaranteed to the faithful by

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<sup>366</sup> Montoya, “El Prólogo” (see note 327), 183.

<sup>367</sup> Foresti cites St. Bernard who associated Mary with the stars because the Virgin, like the stars, sheds light without ever diminishing her own brightness. “Esquemas” (see note 130), 14.

<sup>368</sup> Gerli, “La tipología bíblica” (see note 330), 10. Also, the angel of the Lord addressed Gideon with the same words that Gabriel used in his Annunciation to Mary. In Judges 6:12, the angel’s first words to Gideon are “The Lord is with you” and in Luke 1:28, Gabriel also says to Mary, “The Lord is with you.”

<sup>369</sup> See the account in 1 Samuel 17: 49–50.

Christ, born of Mary. The fountain that never goes dry as found in Isaiah 58:11<sup>370</sup> was also seen as a presage of Mary who constantly pours out mercy to the faithful.

The door, first mentioned in verse 35d, is described in verse 36a as “bien encerrada” (the Closed Gate).<sup>371</sup> But Mary can open the figurative door to Paradise for us because, through her cooperation in the birth of Jesus, we gain access to Heaven. There are numerous examples in the Old Testament of the door to heaven as a pre-figuration of Mary. For example, in Ezekiel 44:1–2, the Lord bars passage into the temple through the east gate.<sup>372</sup> The door of the temple represented the portal to Heaven and, with the birth of Christ, this closed door is opened by Mary.<sup>373</sup>

Berceo returns to nature imagery when he next calls the Virgin “la palomba de fiel bien esmerada” (36c) (the Gall-Cleaned Dove).<sup>374</sup> The dove carried a host of meanings for the poem’s audience, both in the traditions of Christian iconography and Biblical exegesis. For example, in pictorial renderings of the conception of Christ, the Holy Spirit is often depicted as a dove alighting on Mary. Also in Matthew 3:16, after Jesus is baptized, we are told that the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove coming down from Heaven. The dove, as harbinger of the Holy Spirit, was also a common symbol for Mary herself. Medieval writers followed in the footsteps of St. Ildefonso who based his comparisons of the dove with Mary on descriptions of the dove in medieval bestiaries.<sup>375</sup> In the tradition of Old Testament exegesis, the turtledove, a symbol of love and peace as is found in the Song of Songs 2:12 and Genesis 8:10–11, prefigured Mary who brought peace to the world through the birth of Christ.

In strophe 37, Berceo calls the Virgin “Sión.”<sup>376</sup> Zion, as representative of the Jewish people and as synonym for heaven, was closely associated with Mary as participant in the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Israel, i.e., the sending of the

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<sup>370</sup> “fons aquarum cuius non deficient aquae” (www.latinvulgate.com). Last accessed on August 16, 2012.

<sup>371</sup> According to Ackerman this closed door is reminiscent of the “hortus conclusus” from the Song of Songs 4:12 and a metaphor for Mary’s perpetual virginity. Jane E. Ackerman, “The Theme of Mary’s Power in the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*,” *Journal of Hispanic Philology* 8.1 (1983): 17–31; here 20.

<sup>372</sup> “And he brought me back to the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary, which looked toward the east and it was shut. And the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it; because the Lord God of Israel hath entered in by it and it shall be shut.”

<sup>373</sup> Dutton, *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 568.

<sup>374</sup> Bayo and Michael cite the origin of the *Columba sin felle* in Song of Songs 2:14. *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (see note 323), 100, n. 36c.

<sup>375</sup> Bayo and Michael, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (see note 323), 100, n. 36c.

<sup>376</sup> Gerli cites some of the examples I include below. See especially, “La tipología bíblica” (see note 330), 10–11.

Savior. Beautiful Zion, as metaphor for the Virgin, is found in various Old Testament texts such as Jeremiah 4:31 that also make reference to a woman giving birth. Another image of Zion giving birth is found in Micah 4:10. Also, in Isaiah 59:20 and 62:11, the reference to Zion is coupled with the promise that God will come to his people to save them, i.e. by sending the Savior. Another reference to Zion is found in Isaiah 35:10 which says that God's people will be happy there forever, another allusion to Mary's power to bring all the faithful to Paradise. The suffering Virgin is prefigured in the image of the suffering Zion in Lamentations 2:13, but Zion also sings for joy in Zechariah 2:10 because the Lord has come to dwell among his people. Also, in Zechariah 8:3, the Lord vows to dwell in Zion (as Christ had dwelled in Mary's womb) and in Zechariah 9:9 the people of Zion rejoice as their victorious king rides into their midst on a donkey—a prefiguration of Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Mary is also our defender—"nuestra talaya, nuestra defensa" (our Watchtower, our Defense) (25)—in verse 37b. In 37c she is called the throne of Solomon, i.e., a seat of great wisdom.<sup>377</sup> The following strophe claims that Mary encompasses all names within herself without exception:

Non es nomne ninguno que bien derecho venga  
que en alguna guisa a Ella non avenga;  
non atal que rraíz en Ella no la tenga,  
nin Sancho nin Domingo, nin Sancha ni Domenga (38abcd).

[There exists no goodly name  
that in some way does not apply to Her;  
there is none that does not have its root in Her,  
neither Sancho nor Domingo, not Sancha nor Dominga] (26).

Dutton glosses the last line of this strophe as "ni fulano, ni citano, nadie"<sup>378</sup> (not so-and-so, nobody) and Mount and Cash affirm that "Berceo uses the common names Sancho and Domingo and their feminine equivalents to indicate that all Christian names in some way can be traced to the Virgin Mary. Sancho is derived from *sanctus* (holy) and Domingo from *dominicus* (belonging to the Lord)."<sup>379</sup> Bayo and Michael explain that line 38d is an emphatic expression found in proverbs and specifically cite the *Proverbios morales* of Sem Tob de Carrión as an example of this phrase that uses two of the most common names in medieval Spain.<sup>380</sup> The use of these familiar names is yet another example of Berceo's efforts to relate to

<sup>377</sup> The richness and beauty of Solomon's throne is described in 2 Chronicles 9:17–19. Dutton, *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 568.

<sup>378</sup> Dutton, *Gonzalo de Berceo* (see note 132), 570.

<sup>379</sup> Cash and Mount, *Collected Works* (see note 133), 17.

<sup>380</sup> Bayo and Michael, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (see note 323), 101.

his audience, even within this part of the prologue which is primarily structured as formal monastic exegesis on Marian epithets.

Fruits, vegetables, and herbs populate strophe 39. Not only are the plants described familiar to anyone residing in the Mediterranean but Berceo plays on a host of meanings from the literal to the symbolic to the exegetic to enhance his description of the Virgin in terms of plant imagery. In this strophe she is called vine, grape, almond, pomegranate, olive, cedar, balsam, and palm. Vines abound in the Old Testament as, for example, the vine planted in fertile soil which bears much fruit in Ezekiel 17:8. Jesus, of course, refers to the fruit of the vine at the last supper, for example, in Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, and Luke 22:18. John 15:1–10 is devoted to a lengthy metaphor in which Jesus calls himself the real vine, his Father the gardener, and his disciples the branches of the vine. The association of the vine and the grape was intimately bound in the minds of Berceo's audience to the Holy Eucharist and the poet provides this reminder of Mary's pivotal role in bringing about the miracle of transubstantiation.

The almond tree of verse 39a is associated with lightness and sweetness and is one of the first trees to flower in the spring.<sup>381</sup> The almond tree, like grape vines, was prevalent throughout the Mediterranean world and Berceo's audience would have also been aware of its symbolic meanings, especially through Biblical references to this tree. It can symbolize the approval or favor of God and is associated with the Virgin who, as we are told in Luke 6:30, was much favored by God and thus chosen to bear the Christ child. Also in the Old Testament, in Numbers 17:8, Aaron's staff sprouts ripe almond blossoms as a sign of his priesthood. This staff was seen as a prefiguration of Mary's womb which, likewise, flowered spontaneously due to divine grace.<sup>382</sup> The pomegranate is also mentioned in this verse. It is described as full of "granos de gracia" (39b) (seeds of grace) (18) just as Mary is described as full of grace during the annunciation in Luke 1:28. The olive tree is also common in the Bible, as we have seen, and its symbolic value has very ancient, pre-Christian roots. For the Greeks, it was considered a gift from Athena and an indicator of both peace and victory. In Christian iconography the Archangel Gabriel is often depicted bringing an olive branch to Mary in scenes of the Annunciation.<sup>383</sup>

The cedar tree mentioned in verse 39 is associated with beauty and majesty.<sup>384</sup> For example in the Song of Songs 5:15, the majesty of the Lord is equated to the mountains of Lebanon with their towering cedars. And in Numbers 24:6, Balaam

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<sup>381</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 56.

<sup>382</sup> Gerli, "La tipología bíblica" (see note 330), 11. The staff of Aaron is specifically mentioned in strophe 41 as we will see.

<sup>383</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 323.

<sup>384</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 118.

prophesizes that the tents of Israel will be like cedars beside the water, a symbol of strength and prosperity. In Psalm 92:12, David proclaims that the righteous will flourish like the cedars of Lebanon. In Ezekiel 17:23, God plants a cedar on Israel's highest mountain where it will grow, bear seed, and birds of every kind will nest there as a promise of hope for Israel. The cedar as emblem of future prosperity and the fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel will have its fruition in the birth of Jesus through Mary.<sup>385</sup>

The next tree mentioned is balsam, which is the source of balm, a healing agent. Here it is associated with spiritual healing brought about through Mary's part in the birth of the Savior. The palm appears next in the sequence of trees and has a very rich symbolic history. This tree is associated with victory, wealth, and generation—attributes also assigned to the Virgin. Because of the resistance and elasticity of its leaf, from the most remote times, we find palm leaves as a sign of victory. In Christian iconography, martyrs were often seen holding up a palm in resistance to objects of torture as a sign of the martyr's spiritual victory over his/her tormenters. Also, Christ is sometimes depicted carrying a palm as a symbol of his triumph over sin and death. And, of course, the palm is associated with Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.<sup>386</sup>

Finally, in verse 39d, Berceo calls Mary the staff of Moses. In Exodus 4:2–5 we read that Moses's staff was converted into a serpent as a miraculous sign to convince the Israelites to follow him out of bondage in Egypt.<sup>387</sup> This same staff is also the instrument by which Moses brings the plagues upon Egypt to release the Jews from slavery. Just as the staff had been the key to the Israelites' freedom so, too, Mary brings release from the bonds of sin through her Son, Jesus. Strophe 40 is devoted to the metonymic relationship between the Virgin and the staff of Moses:

El fust que Moysés enna mano portava,  
que confondió los sabios que Faraón preçiava,  
el que abrié los mares e después los çerrava,  
sinon a la Gloriosa ál non significava (40abcd).

[The Staff that Moses carried in his hand,  
that confounded the wise men esteemed by Pharaoh,  
the one that parted the waters and then closed them—  
if it did not signify the Virgin, it signified nothing] (26).

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<sup>385</sup> Also, in the Middle Ages, the three woods that compose the cedar were emblematic of the trinity. Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 118.

<sup>386</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 334. See Matthew 21:8, Mark 11:8, and John 12:13.

<sup>387</sup> This same staff is referred to in Exodus 4:17, 7:15, 9:23, and 10:13.

The last strophe of this section is number 42. It contains a lovely metaphor summing up all the names applicable to the Virgin, saying that they are greater than the number of flowers found in the largest meadow. This section of the prologue that began with the pronouncement in verses 31cd—"las flores son los nomnes que li da el dictado / a la Virgo María, Madre del buen Criado" (The flowers are the names the book gives / to the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Good Servant) (25)—has now come full circle and concludes that names for the Virgin outnumber the flowers on the earth. Even though Berceo has devoted forty lines of poetry to an enumeration of the names for Mary, he now states in strophe 42 that it is impossible to include them all and he feels like a man stuck in a well where he cannot see bottom: "entramos en grand pozo, fondón nol' trobaremos" (42b) (for we enter a great well, whose bottom we cannot find) (26). In other words, his efforts have only scratched the surface of the many attributes of the Virgin and below the surface lie countless others. As we have seen, almost all of these epithets for the Virgin derive from traditions of Christian iconography or the exegetic practice of finding prefigurations or prophecies about Mary in Biblical passages from the Old Testament.

In the last section of the prologue, comprised of strophes 42–46, Berceo announces his intention to recount some of Mary's miracles. He first reminds his audience of key images from the preceding verses. The fruit trees represent miracles performed by the Virgin and the songs of the birds are the praises the faithful offer up to Mary:

De suso lo dissiemos que eran los fructales  
 en qui fazién las aves los cantos naturales  
 los sus sanctos miráculos grandes e principales,  
 los quales organamos ennas festas caubdales (43abcd).

[We have already said that the the fruit trees  
 in which the birds were singing their various songs  
 were Her holy miracles, great and outstanding,  
 which we sing on the principal feast days] (26).

In the following strophe, Berceo speaks again of the singing birds, shade, fountains, flowers, and fruit trees saying that he plans to turn the "fructales" (fruit trees) into "viessos" (verses). These verses constitute the remainder of the book, i.e., the miracles of Our Lady composed in *cuaderna vía*. Ackerman observes that "If . . . each miracle-story is seen as a fruit-bearing tree, then the effect of Mary's actions in so many episodes is that of the varied, abundant grove he describes in the Introduction."<sup>388</sup> The poet says that he will climb up into the trees where he can write some accounts of Mary's many miracles. Thus he is literally in the trees,

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<sup>388</sup> Ackerman, "The Theme" (see note 371), 29.

i.e., in his book of Marian tales, positioning himself within his text as the spokesman for the Virgin.<sup>389</sup> Berceo ends this transitional part of the prologue by humbly saying that he will only be able to write about the Virgin's miracles with Her aid and guidance: "la Gloriosa me guíe que lo pueda complir, / ca yo non me trevía en ello a venir" (45cd) (May the Glorious One guide me so that I may complete the task / for I would not dare to undertake it otherwise) (27). The humility *topos* was common rhetorical practice, but here, Berceo uses it to stress his need for Holy Mary's help in any endeavor he undertakes.<sup>390</sup> He then asks the Virgin to guide his pen as he strives to write about her miracles:

Terrélo por miláculo que lo faz la Gloriosa  
 si guiarme quisiere a mí en esta cosa;  
 Madre plena de grácia, Reýna poderosa,  
 Tú me guía en ello, ca eres piadosa" (46abcd).

[I will take it as a miracle wrought by the Glorious One  
 if She should deign to guide me in this task:  
 Mother Full of Grace, Powerful Queen,  
 Guide me in it for You are merciful] (27).

The lovely meadow, with its trees, springs, flowers, singing birds, welcome shade, etc., is very real for Berceo in the role he ascribes to himself as a tired pilgrim. The weary pilgrim/narrator finds a pleasant spot where he can relax a bit before continuing on his journey. In this pilgrimage of life, he will stop for a while and be refreshed by tales of the Virgin's miracles. The beautiful meadow, as metaphor for the mercies of the Virgin, offers him a glimpse of the Paradise that awaits the faithful. He also invites his readers to rest in the meadow with him, to enjoy its lovely natural elements, and learn more about the power of Holy Mary in their lives. The device of the meadow and its delights is borrowed from the literary motif of the *locus amoenus*, but it is also real for Berceo and his audience in the guise of weary pilgrims. According to Bayo:

El sentido literal de la alegoría de Gonzalo de Berceo comienza por remitir a una de las experiencias más comunes a su audiencia: la de hacer un alto en el camino para pararse a descansar a la sombra de una arboleda. Su propósito no es sólo hacer más asequible a su público un contenido doctrinal por medio de una figura cotidiana, sino establecer la conexión entre lo terrenal y los espiritual de modo que el pensamiento

<sup>389</sup> Bayo, "La alegoría" (see note 319) classifies this last section of the prologue as anagogic (58).

<sup>390</sup> Jesús Montoya observes that Berceo was also aware of the *sermo humilis*. "El alegorismo. Premisa necesaria al vocabulario de los *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*," *Studi mediolatini e volgari* 30 (1984): 167–90; here 173. On the humility, or false modesty *topos*, see also Curtius (see note 38) who traces this rhetorical device to the classical pre-Christian models (83).

de la Salvación no deje de acudir a la memoria, de quienes le han escuchado cuando vuelvan a encontrarse en tal situación tan acostumbrada.<sup>391</sup>

[The literal sense of Gonzalo de Berceo's allegory begins with recourse to one of the most common experiences for his audience: that of stopping on the road to rest under the shade of the trees. His purpose is to make not only his doctrinal content more accesible to his audience by means of an everyday image, but also to establish the connection between the earthly and the spiritual so that they remember the message of salvation whenever they find themselves in this common situation.]

I have quoted Bayo at some length because I believe he has summarized the essence of the prologue well. Berceo, with his feet firmly placed in a natural setting familiar to his public, gently leads his readers/listeners to a fuller understanding of Mary's role in their lives. The miracles he will relate are signs of her mercies to the faithful and remind them of her role in the attainment of Salvation.<sup>392</sup> The natural elements of the pleasant meadow described in the prologue bring delight in both the physical (literal) sense and the spiritual (figurative) sense as metaphors for Holy Mary. The learned members of his audience would enjoy the exegetical and iconographic traditions associated with the natural elements but anyone reading or listening to the prologue did not have to perceive all layers of meaning to appreciate the central message of the prologue. The poet will relate his miracle tales while seated in the lovely meadow. Surrounded by natural elements that will constantly remind him and his audience of Mary's grace, he will recount stories about her interventions in the lives of everyday men and women.

As we have seen, the green meadow with its fountain, trees, flowers and birds is the cornerstone of Berceo's allegorical prologue. He makes use of a familiar setting and detailed description to lead his audience to a fuller understanding of Mary's role in the salvation of mankind.<sup>393</sup> Ackerman speaks of the meadow motif as revealing "Mary's generative nature to more than one kind of audience."<sup>394</sup> The unlettered immediately identified with the respite and refreshment this lush *prado* could provide for a tired traveler while churchmen also appreciated its allegorical potential both as the *locus amoenus* of classical literature and the paradisiacal metaphor of Biblical exegesis.<sup>395</sup> Berceo also relies on the fundamental theological concept that human knowledge, which depends on the perception of the natural world, can lead us to an abstract perception of divine nature.<sup>396</sup> In his prologue to

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<sup>391</sup> Bayo, "La alegoría" (see note 319), 56–57.

<sup>392</sup> On this point, see Gerli, "La tipología bíblica" (see note 330), 13.

<sup>393</sup> Foster, *Christian Allegory* (see note 100), 123.

<sup>394</sup> Ackerman, "The Theme" (see note 371), 19.

<sup>395</sup> Ackerman, "The Theme" (see note 371), 19–20.

<sup>396</sup> Montoya Martínez, "El alegorismo" (see note 390), 174.

the *MNS*, he invites his audience to enjoy the beauty of the verdant meadow while also exhorting them to peer beneath its surface. The allegorical interpretation does not eliminate appreciation of the lush natural setting but rather enhances our consciousness of the divine plan reflected in its beauty.



## Chapter Seven

### Sensual *locus amoenus*: *Razón de amor con los denuestos del agua y el vino*

*Razón de amor con los denuestos del agua y el vino*<sup>397</sup> is an anonymous poem that dates from the first half of the thirteenth century.<sup>398</sup> Despite its brevity, this text has engendered considerable debate over its content. Some critics<sup>399</sup> contend that the work is a sloppy mix of two texts—the *Razón de amor* and *Los denuestos*— while others argue for it as a coherent whole.<sup>400</sup> I see the poem as an integrated whole with two scenes that present the same theme in different formats. The natural setting for these two scenes is a forest but, as we shall see, the forest in *Razón* is not portrayed as a hostile or dangerous environment as it was, for example, in the *PMC* or the *VSM*. The two scenes in the poem, one of lovemaking and the other a debate between water and wine, take place in an isolated forest glen. Pearsall and Salter remind us that medieval readers were familiar with groves and pastoral landscapes from literature and art, but also from their experience of nature.<sup>401</sup> Even though the poem's description of the pleasant forest clearing is reminiscent in many of its aspects of the *locus amoenus* of classical rhetoric and the medieval poetry of courtly love, this natural setting in the *Razón* is designed to celebrate the

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<sup>397</sup> Hereafter *Razón*.

<sup>398</sup> It is found on folios 124–26 of manuscript Lat. 3576 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

<sup>399</sup> Notably, Guiseppe Petraglione, "Il Romance de Lope de Moros," *Studi di Filologia Romanza* 8 (1901): 485–502; here 485, and Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos, "Observações sobre alguns textos lyricos da antiga poesia peninsular, I: O Romance de Lope de Moros," *Revista Lusitana* 7 (1902): 1–32; here 10.

<sup>400</sup> See, for example, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, "Razón de amor con los denuestos del agua y el vino," *Revue Hispanique* 13 (1905): 602–18; Alicia C. Ferraresi, *De amor y poesía en la España Medieval: Prólogo a Juan Ruiz*. Estudios de Lingüística y Literatura, IV (Guanajuato, México: El Colegio de México, 1976), 43–45; Harriet Goldberg, "The *Razón de amor* and *Los denuestos del agua y el vino* as Unified Dream Report," *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 31.1 (1984): 41–49; here 41–42; and, Olga Impey, "La estructura unitaria de *Razón de amor*," *Journal of Hispanic Philology* 4.1 (1979): 1–24; here 1–5.

<sup>401</sup> Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes* (see note 13), 63.

physical delights of love and is loaded with sensual imagery. The forest in this work is viewed positively and the natural environs are depicted as participating in the lovers' encounter and setting in motion the debate between water and wine.

Most critics have either ignored the importance of the forest setting in *Razón* or simply dismissed it as part of a courtly love motif.<sup>402</sup> Enzo Franchini has studied the poem's setting but is more concerned with its symbolic meaning than with a careful analysis of the poet's descriptions of the natural environment. Franchini sees the flowers, spring, and trees in the forest clearing as symbols that the poet uses to elaborate a treatise about the struggle between *amor purus* and *amor mixtus*. His view of the forest and its natural elements excludes any connection to observed natural phenomena and he confines his analysis to a poetic exercise squarely within the tradition of courtly love.<sup>403</sup> Van Antwerp hints at the erotic possibility of the poem's natural setting when she openly states that the lovers "make love in the shade of an olive tree."<sup>404</sup> Even though Van Antwerp alludes to aspects of the forest setting as part of the poem's erotic tone, she insists on defining nature solely in terms of a *topos* of *fin amors*. In my analysis of the forest glen I do not dismiss the influence of such a prevalent literary motif as the *locus amoenus* but I will also focus on the poem's descriptions of nature as part of poet's unique vision of his environment that he crafts as literary landscape.

The poem's structure is unique and bears recapping here. The poet first recounts that, after eating his midday meal, he lies down to rest under an olive tree. In a nearby apple tree he spies a silver cup filled with wine, and up higher in the tree, a glass of cold water. He takes off his clothes because of the heat and drinks from a cold spring. Suddenly he sees a lovely lady approaching who immediately professes her love for him. The two recognize each other as suitors even though they have never met because each wears clothing sent by the other as tokens of love. After the two make love under an olive tree, the damsel departs and the poet, exhausted from the encounter, tries once again to sleep. A dove appears in the tree where the two vessels are perched and, while trying to drink from the one containing the cold water, the bird upsets the glass spilling water into the cup of wine. This leads to the debate between water and wine in which each defends its

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<sup>402</sup> Some critics deny, altogether, the sexual aspect of the love encounter described in the *Razón*. For example, Alicia Ferraresi sees the lovers' meeting as an example of the chaste encounter in the tradition of *fin amors*. This critic traces many of the sexual allusions in the poem to parallels in the Biblical *Song of Songs* and, although she admits the possibility of intimate sexual contact between the lovers, she places the poem squarely within the literary world of courtly love. Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 101–03.

<sup>403</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 263.

<sup>404</sup> Margaret Van Antwerp, "Razón de amor and the Popular Tradition," *Romance Philology* 32 (1979): 1–17; here 1.

virtues and belittles the other. The poem ends with the usual call for wine to reward the singer of the poem.

As Arsenio Pacheco points out, the first ten lines of the poem are the *exordio* in which the singer's purpose is to attract an audience and to give them information about the poem's author.<sup>405</sup> The latter is described as an *escolar* who has experience in love: "siempre duenas amo" (v. 6)<sup>406</sup> (he always loved women). He had learned *cortesía* in Germany and France where he had been brought up and also in Lombardy where he had lived for some time. Franchini observes that this biographical data about the poet may or may not be true but, citing the poet's extensive knowledge of traditional and Latin literary motifs, he takes these assertions as veridical.<sup>407</sup> Leo Spitzer sees in this biographical data a poet who is a goliardic cleric, hiding behind an appearance of courtesy and *fin amors* in order to pursue women for sex.<sup>408</sup> While I lean toward the latter interpretation, I believe that the particular sexual encounter recounted in the *Razón* is much more subtle than simply a scene of unbridled sexual desire.

The next part of the poem is of most interest for the present analysis. Here, the poet describes an idyllic natural setting—a forest glen—where the lovers will meet. As we have noted, Franchini takes little notice of the description of this natural setting, dismissing it as nothing more than another example of the obligatory setting for medieval love poems.<sup>409</sup> He and other critics set aside the description of the forest clearing as a stock *locus amoenus* but a careful analysis of the natural features themselves suggest that the poet is consciously adapting and modifying many of the elements of this motif. Each of the elements described is essential for the poem's overall effect in terms of plot, tonality, and theme.

The poet sets the amorous encounter in the month of April, the month the Romans dedicated to the goddess of love, Venus.<sup>410</sup> The protagonist is resting under an olive tree, a staple in the Mediterranean agriculture and a tree of which both the poet and audience had intimate knowledge. Under the shade of the olive tree, he spies two glasses suspended in the crown of a nearby apple tree. In addition to first-hand knowledge of olive and fruit trees, the poet could also draw on these trees' rich symbolic history, both in classical and Christian mythology. For the ancients the olive tree was a gift from Athena (Minerva), the sacred tree of the Acropolis, and symbol of victory and peace.

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<sup>405</sup> Arsenio Pacheco, "¿Razón de amor o denuestos del agua y el vino?" *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 51 (1974): 1–15; here 3.

<sup>406</sup> All quotes are from the edition of Ramón Menéndez Pidal, 1905 *Revue Hispanique* 13, 602–18 (see note 400). Verse numbers follow the citations. All translations are my own.

<sup>407</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 264.

<sup>408</sup> Leo Spitzer, "Razón de amor," *Romania* 7 (1950): 145–65; here 161.

<sup>409</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 270.

<sup>410</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 39.

In the Bible, olive trees are associated with wisdom, prosperity, and peace.<sup>411</sup> For Franchini, in his scheme of the poem as a struggle between *amor purus* and *amor mixtus*, the olive is associated with the former and is a symbol of abstinence and chastity.<sup>412</sup> Spitzer<sup>413</sup> and Ferraresi<sup>414</sup> identify the olive tree as the most common tree found in the poetic tradition of the amorous vision. But, for the poet of the *Razón*, the olive tree was also a tangible reality, a life-giving source for food and oil that sustained many Mediterranean cultures. Its association with fertility and abundance—both in the physical and symbolic sense—was a clue to the audience that the scene the poet is about to paint will be a sexual encounter between lovers under the protective shade of the olive tree's branches.

The designation of the apple tree as the tree in which the two glasses are suspended is a bit more complex. Both Ferraresi and Franchini point out the multifaceted symbolism associated with the apple tree. As we have seen, the apple tree is often identified as the tree of the forbidden fruit alluded to in the Book of Genesis. In this context, the apple is often associated with temptation, carnal love, and sexual union. Franchini points out that this interpretation is also valid in pre-Christian literature such as in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.<sup>415</sup> Ferraresi also cites the presence of the apple tree in the Book of Revelation where it becomes the tree in the celestial Paradise on the banks of the river where the waters of life flow.<sup>416</sup> Thus, the apple tree is closely associated with temptation as well as with a paradisiacal setting, as we have seen in the case of Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, and it is indeed hard to separate the poet's inclusion of this iconographic tree from its associative contexts. The poet finds himself in an idyllic setting akin to paradise and the presence of the apple tree here would lead readers to expect a scene of temptation or sexual encounter.

The poet sees in the apple tree a silver vessel containing red wine and, higher up in the tree, a glass full of water. Unlike the olive and apple trees thus far described, the cups do not form part of a realistic natural setting. Up to this point in the poem, the description has centered on the natural elements in the spot where the poet stops to rest. The presence of the cups draws the reader's attention to the liquids they hold. Both Ferraresi and Franchini cite the influence of the *Song of Songs* on the presence of the goblet of wine in the *Razón*.<sup>417</sup> This is "wine of love"

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<sup>411</sup> Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 323.

<sup>412</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 276.

<sup>413</sup> Spitzer, "Razón de amor" (see note 408), 150.

<sup>414</sup> Ferraresi, *De Amor* (see note 400), 70.

<sup>415</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 278.

<sup>416</sup> See Book of Revelation 22:2 which reads, in part, "On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations." Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 70.

<sup>417</sup> Ferraresi states that "el Esposo del *Cantar* dirá que al entrar en su huerto 'bibit vinum meum'" (the

according to Ferraresi,<sup>418</sup> and Franchini maintains that the wine “possesses a clearly erotic sense.”<sup>419</sup> The poem states that the “senora del uerto” (v. 20) (lady of the garden) had placed the cup of wine in the tree for her lover to drink from when he came to the clearing.<sup>420</sup> The poem also contends that whoever drinks this wine everyday will not fall ill:

Qui de tal uino ouiesse  
en-la mana quan comiesse:  
e dello ouiesse cada-dia,  
nu[n]cas mas enfermarya (vv. 23–26).

[Whoever drinks this wine  
in the morning when he eats  
and drinks it everyday  
will never become ill.]

Franchini contends that the poet of *Razón* considers amorous desire to be a sickness that requires medication in the form of wine.<sup>421</sup> The poem recommends that this wine be taken every day along with the morning meal. Since all critics agree on the erotic implications of drinking wine, the poet metaphorically implies that daily sexual activity (drinking of the wine every morning with breakfast) is advisable for one’s good health. Goldberg obliquely recognizes this possibility when she states that “Perhaps the wine has magical properties—perpetual immunity from illness, activated if it is taken daily with the morning meal (presumably after a night spent with the *dueña*) . . .”<sup>422</sup> The fact that she relegates this last comment to a parenthetical remark shows some reluctance to pursue this idea, even though I find it to be the most logical explanation. Also, we should note that the poet is certain about the curative properties of the wine whereas he fears the potential magical properties of the cup of water, also suspended in the branches of the apple tree. Even though it is hot and the poet is thirsty, he resists drinking from the cup of water, preferring instead to drink from the spring in the garden. He is not at all suspicious about the water in the spring but fears that water in the glass in the tree may be poisoned or enchanted. The preference for the naturally-flowing and pure water of the spring is an especially intriguing

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Husband of the *Song* will say upon entering the garden ‘drink of my wine’). *De amor* (see note 400), 71.

<sup>418</sup> Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 71.

<sup>419</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 280.

<sup>420</sup> Franchini cites numerous examples in which wine is offered by the lady as a prelude to lovemaking. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 286–97.

<sup>421</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 280.

<sup>422</sup> Goldberg, “The *Razón de amor*” (see note 400), 43.

detail in the poet's description of the forest clearing that has gone largely unnoticed by other critics.

With respect to the two vessels—one of water and the other of wine—Ferraresi asserts that their symbolic value is a mystery. She hints at some erotic connotation for the two vessels but she backs away from pursuing this idea to its fullest. Franchini takes another path entirely, equating the water with chaste love and the wine with erotic love and emphasizes the tension between the two as portrayed in the poem.<sup>423</sup> Ferraresi admits that the mixture of water and wine implies only a chaste kiss between the lovers which could also be interpreted as a symbol of divine love.<sup>424</sup> Following this line of thought, she sees a relationship between the lovers' kiss and the kiss of peace offered by the faithful to each other during the mass.<sup>425</sup> While a Christian allegorical interpretation works on one level, I believe that Ferraresi is forcing a Christian allegory on phenomena which are patently erotic in nature.

After observing the suspended vessels, the poet/lover lies down in the forest clearing to take a nap. Significantly, first he removes his clothes because of the excessive heat: "parti de mi-las uistiduras" (v. 35) (I took off my garments). Grieve and Goldberg argue for this scene as a prelude to an erotic dream, recounted in the rest of the *Razón*.<sup>426</sup> While their arguments are coherent, I believe that the encounter of the lovers is quite real. If we read this section literally the young man clearly states that he has removed his clothes and is naked, or nearly naked. The young woman who enters the garden will find him undressed, thus heightening the erotic potential of their encounter.

The next lines refer to the cold fountain or spring near the spot where the poet/lover lies down and whose waters refresh him. Franchini points out that the *fuelle perenal* (perennial fountain) enjoyed a wide diffusion in literature as evidenced by its presence in the *Libro de buen amor*, the *Libro de Alexandre* and the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* of Berceo, to mention only a few examples.<sup>427</sup> According to Franchini, the perennial fountain is most often associated with "un lugar de alivio" (a place of relief).<sup>428</sup> The poet speaks of the spring's virtue and its power to cool the air for a distance equal to a hundred paces around it (vv.39–41). The poet/lover drinks water from the spring before the lady's appearance, as I have

<sup>423</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 289.

<sup>424</sup> Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 73.

<sup>425</sup> Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 73.

<sup>426</sup> Patricia Grieve, "Through the Silver Goblet: A Note on the 'vaso de plata' in *Razón de amor*," *Revista de estudios hispánicos* 20.2 (1987): 15–20. Goldberg, "The *Razón de amor*," (see note 400).

<sup>427</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 290–91. Also, as we have seen, Melibea refers to the "fontesica" (little fountain) that gurgles among the "frescas yervas" (fresh grass) of her garden (323).

<sup>428</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 291.

noted. According to Franchini, the cold water of the spring represents virginity and drinking the water means to sully that virginity.<sup>429</sup> Despite this statement about the poem's erotic content, this critic ultimately sees the poem as a conflict between chaste and sensual love and his only reading of the spring water is a symbolic one. Van Antwerp also sees the spring as symbolic, emphasizing that, in folkloric tradition, the spring represents both fecundity and rejuvenation.<sup>430</sup> The poet dedicates several lines to a praise of the cooling and refreshing properties of the spring, clearly drawing our attention to it. He is aware of the symbolic associations the spring may inspire but he also gives a realistic image of a tired traveler who on a hot day enjoys the clear, cold water he finds in the forest clearing. We have already noted that the poet has no doubt about the purity of the water in the spring, eagerly drinking it without a second thought, whereas, he rejected the water in the glass for fear it might be contaminated. Apart from any symbolic connotations that the spring and its refreshing waters may hold, we also need to recognize a literal reading of this description. By experience the poet and his readers/listeners would have been aware of the purity of spring water whereas other sources of water were suspect and often, even, harmful to one's health.

The poet next turns his attention to a description of plants found in the garden. Odoriferous plants, including sage, roses, lilies and violets, are found growing around the spring. Like the poet, all these plants enjoy the water the naturally-flowing spring provides and thrive in the clearing. In addition, we can assume that these plants were familiar to the readers/listeners of the *Razón* as part of their own experience and as literary metaphors. Sage, or *salvia*, was well-known for its salubrious properties and is grown widely throughout Europe. This plant was used in the treatment of a number of illnesses or conditions and the poem's audience would certainly identify it as beneficial. The other plants mentioned also carried very positive associations. The violet is associated with spring, the time of love, and is noted for its intense aroma, a fact that is specifically mentioned in the poem: "mas ell-olor que d'i yxia / a-omne muerto ressuçitarya" (vv. 49–50) (the smell that it exudes could resuscitate a dead man). According to Franchini, the poet also used the violet as a metaphor for feminine beauty and its relationship with Venus implies sensual and physical love.<sup>431</sup>

The rose and lily are also traditionally associated with feminine beauty. The rose, in particular, is associated with Venus in classical mythology.<sup>432</sup> And both the

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<sup>429</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 292.

<sup>430</sup> Van Antwerp, "Razón de amor" (see note 404), 10–11.

<sup>431</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 283.

<sup>432</sup> When Venus was born from the foam of the surf, she wanted to show her power by creating something wholly perfect. As the last drops of water fell from her body, her breast sprouted a beautiful white rose. The goddess plucked the flower from her body and used it to adorn herself, not permitting any other woman to possess such a flower. But, when Bacchus approached Venus,

white rose and the lily are common symbols associated with the Virgin Mary. The lily, traditionally associated with purity, is the flower most often found in pictorial representations of Christ's mother. Red roses, however, are often associated, especially in traditional lyric poetry, with sexual union and the loss of virginity.<sup>433</sup> This combination of symbols of virginity and sensuality prefigure the maiden's sexual encounter with the poet/lover. Furthermore these plants were well-known to the poet's audience and especially the inclusion of red roses would have been viewed as propitious for the scene of love-making that will occur in the forest clearing. That many of these plants also provoked positive symbolic and emotional responses prefigures the pleasurable events that will be narrated later.

After the poet first drinks from the spring, he picks a flower. While, as we have seen, some critics interpret the act of drinking from the spring as symbolic of the loss of virginity, there can be no doubt that the poem's audience would have associated picking the flower with deflowering a virgin. The latter image is, indeed, difficult to read on any other level. Precisely after the poet/lover takes these two actions, the young woman appears.<sup>434</sup> She is described in detail, but the poet's portrayal of her does not precisely conform to the typical *descriptio puellae* of the medieval love poetry. For instance, the lady's eyes are black rather than the more common adjective, "relucientes" (shining).<sup>435</sup> Also, in the *Razón* the lady has short hair, whereas long tresses are usually part of the stock description.<sup>436</sup> Just as the poet carefully chose natural elements to describe the forest glen where the lovers meet, he also clearly adapts the typical description of the *dama* of courtly love to create his own unique version of this lady. In fact, he may have chosen to deviate from the courtly model precisely because the encounter he is about to present is far from the chaste meeting of lovers in the tradition of *fin amors*. Or the poet may simply have included characteristics he found particularly attractive or alluring in a young woman.

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a drop of his red wine fell on the white rose and stained it. Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (note 51), 374. The wine in *Razón* fits in very nicely with this legend.

<sup>433</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 285.

<sup>434</sup> Van Antwerp states that "The drink of water (like the flower-picking) serves as a symbolic prelude to the fulfillment of desire, for just as he finishes drinking and prepares to sing of love, the lady he has worshipped from afar appears." "*Razón de amor*" (see note 404), 12.

<sup>435</sup> Franchini points out that a lady with dark eyes is found in other works of Spanish literature such as *Santa María Egipcíaca*, *Mocedades de Rodrigo* and the lyric of Ibn Quzmān. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 314–15.

<sup>436</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 314–17.

The text also describes the lady's rich garments.<sup>437</sup> She wears a cloak and a tunic ("manto" and "brial" respectively) made of "xamet." "Xamet" is the modern "jamete" which is defined as a rich cloth of silk sometimes embroidered with gold.<sup>438</sup> She also wears a hat to protect her from the midday sun, already alluded to in the poem. The poet next inserts a personal opinion: "que nol fiziese mal la-siesta" (v.73) (a siesta wouldn't do her any harm). The allusion to the *siesta* is the most intriguing. We know that the poet/lover has removed his clothes and lies beneath the olive tree near the cool spring to nap. He seems to suggest here that the young lady joins him and the details about her garments are included because she is about to discard them. Other details about clothing add to the eroticism of this scene. For example, the woman carries gloves in her hand. These are the gloves that the poet/lover recognizes as one of the gifts he had sent her before their meeting. Gloves are a powerful sexual symbol as they imply insertion (much like shoes) and are an intimate gift. Likewise the young woman recognizes the poet's/lover's belt as one she had made for him with her own hands. The belt is another intimate object which implies tying or joining, another powerful sexual symbol.<sup>439</sup> Also, as Van Antwerp points out, the gift of any personal garment can represent either the promise or the fulfillment of a sexual relationship.<sup>440</sup>

The young woman also picks flowers, as did the young man earlier, a powerful image which reinforces and prefigures a loss of virginity. While picking flowers she sings of her undying love for "meu amigo" (v.78) (my lover) who she identifies as an "escolar," the same word used to describe the poet. The blending of the poet and the male protagonist of the encounter is thus complete. The young woman next sings of her fear that her lover (whom she has never met) is in love with another: "otra duena / cortesa e bela e bona" (vv. 90–91) (another woman / courteous and beautiful and good). But she knows that, when they meet, he will show his love for her. The song is, of course, reminiscent of the *cantigas d'amigo*, especially in Galician-Portuguese lyric.<sup>441</sup> When she finishes the song the poet comments that, even though the woman does not yet know him to be the lover

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<sup>437</sup> Although the richness of the garments may imply the woman's noble status, I do not agree with Ferraresi who sees the rich garments as evidence of the lady's nobility and claims that they are described in detail because the poet wants to emphasize that these lovers represent the *cortesía* of *fin amors*. *De amor* (see note 400), 79.

<sup>438</sup> Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 21st ed. 2 vols. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1992), II, 1198.

<sup>439</sup> Franchini points out that the "cinta" was a common gift in the *cantigas d'amigo* and in traditional lyric. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 325.

<sup>440</sup> Van Antwerp, "Razón de amor" (see note 404), 5.

<sup>441</sup> Franchini also reminds us that the jealousy the young woman expresses is not an accusation that the lover has been unfaithful, but rather her own fears that another woman may ensnare him. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 336.

about whom she is singing, she does not run away from him.<sup>442</sup> She seems to recognize him on some level and does not shy away when he takes her hand and pulls her down to lie down beside him under the tree: “junniemos amos en-par / e posamos so ell-oliuar” (vv. 104–05) (let’s lie down together under the olive tree). Although Franchini shies away from the explicitly sexual nature of this encounter, he does concede that this scene is sensual and describes it as spontaneous, natural, extroverted and unfettered in sharp contrast to the codified encounter of lovers in the tradition of courtly lyric.<sup>443</sup> I agree with Franchini that the scene is spontaneous and does not conform to the rules of *fin amors*. Furthermore, I believe that the poet of the *Razón* is making a conscious break with this literary tradition to portray a scene of sexual intimacy. He has borrowed from the traditions of courtly love but manipulates both elements in his description of the natural setting as well as in the protagonists’ behavior rather than slavishly following established literary patterns.

The poem does not specifically state that the two make love but, given the poetic traditions with which the audience of the *Razón* was familiar, explicitness was unnecessary.<sup>444</sup> The poet relies on the audience’s expectations for a chaste encounter in the courtly love tradition and cleverly manipulates those expectations to depict a scene which could have been perceived as clearly sexual in nature. In the song the lady sings as she enters the forest clearing, she proclaims that she is madly in love with her suitor and asserts that, should she encounter him in the flesh, she would have no inhibitions about expressing her love (vv. 93–94). Her spontaneous and amorous reaction when she realizes that the young man relaxing by the spring is her suitor bears out the truth of her lyrics.

Once the poet/lover has pulled the young woman to his side to lie with him under the olive tree he asks her if she has ever experienced love: “dezit, la- mia senor, / si ssupiestes nu[n]ca d’amor?” (vv. 106–07) (tell me, my lady, have you ever known love?). To this tasteful inquiry, the lady responds that she is passionately in love with one whom she knows only through others’ descriptions of him. At that moment, the poet/lover recognizes the gifts he has sent to the woman and he asks her what she has received from her lover. She replies that the gloves she carries, her cape, her veil and a ring she is wearing.<sup>445</sup> Again, these are all gifts of intimate apparel or adornment which, as we have seen, imply the fulfillment of sexual desire. This is also true, as we have noted, of the belt that the

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<sup>442</sup> According to Franchini, this motif may have been inspired by pastoral lyrics in which a shepherdess runs away when surprised by a knight because she suspects he will sexually attack her. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 338. If this is the case, it is even more significant that the lady in the *Razón* does not run away when confronted by the poet/lover.

<sup>443</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 327.

<sup>444</sup> Van Antwerp, “*Razón de amor*” (see note 404), 12.

<sup>445</sup> On the image of the ring, see Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 83.

young man wears and which the woman recognizes as the one she had made with her own hands and sent to her lover.<sup>446</sup> The mutual recognition by the two young people that they are now in the presence of the lovers they have never met leads directly to a physical reaction. The next four verses present the consummation of their long distance pining for one another:

Tolios el manto de los o[n]bros,  
 besome-la-boca e por los oios,  
 tan gran sabor de mi auia,  
 sol-fablar non me podía

(vv. 126–29).

[She took the cape from her shoulders  
 she kissed me on the mouth and eyes  
 she took such delight in me  
 that she could not speak.]

Ferraresi insists on taking the “beso” (kiss) mentioned in this passage as literal and representative of the greatest of favors that the courtly lady may bestow on her suitor in the world of *fin amors*.<sup>447</sup> My interpretation is quite different. In the first place, the passage begins with the young woman removing her “manto” or cape. The act of disrobing could have been interpreted by the poem’s audience as a prelude to sexual activity. Also, the cape and her other garments were minutely described by the poet and the audience realizes that she is casting aside her rich clothing without concern when she is overcome by passion. Many critics including Spitzer, Pacheco, and Franchini comment on the lady taking the initiative in this encounter.<sup>448</sup> Also, we know that the young man has already removed his garments due to the heat. To me, the dual themes of the heat of the day and the poet’s/lover’s thirst imply sexual ardor and desire. His desire appears fully shared by his lover when she appears. The poem specifies that she kisses the mouth and eyes of her lover and Franchini interprets these acts as ones of “confianza y entrega” (confidence and surrender)<sup>449</sup> and recognizes the kiss as the sentimental climax of the poem.<sup>450</sup> This critic also points out that the kiss occurs at the exact midpoint of the poem.<sup>451</sup> Even though the lady loses her power to speak when she is caught up in making love, she does speak at last, giving thanks to God for what

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<sup>446</sup> Franchini notes the presence of belts in the tradition of the *cantigas d’amigo*. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 344.

<sup>447</sup> Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 92.

<sup>448</sup> For a discussion of other poetic traditions in which the lady takes the lead in a scene of love, see Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 307–08.

<sup>449</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 348.

<sup>450</sup> Impey insists that the kiss does not lead to the consummation of the lovers’ passion. “La estructura” (see note 400), 14–15.

<sup>451</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 348.

she has just enjoyed: “Dios señor, a-ti-loa[do] / quanto conozco meu- amado!” (vv. 130–31) (God be praised that I have known my lover). Spitzer points out that these lines reflect a tradition from the *cantigas d’amigo* in which the lady celebrates her sexual pleasures.<sup>452</sup> Spitzer also emphasizes that the use of the verb “conocer” in the lady’s speech indicates that she knew her lover in the Biblical sense.<sup>453</sup> I agree with Spitzer on this point and it should be noted that she repeats the idea of knowing her lover and speaks of having enjoyed “tod bien” with him: “agora e-tod bien [comigo] / quant conozco meo amigo” (vv. 132–33) (now everything is wonderful since I know my lover).

After making love, the two spend time talking about and recounting their sexual encounter: “Vna gran pieça ali-estando, / de nuestro amor ementando” (vv. 134–35) (We stayed there for some time recalling our love). When the lady announces that she must leave, she reminds her lover that he has no reason to doubt her love since she has just given herself completely to him (v. 140). Ferraresi, while not totally accepting a frankly sexual interpretation of this scene, comments that the lovers’ repose is one reminiscent of visionary literature in which the man contemplates, at his leisure, the nude, or partially nude body of his lover.<sup>454</sup> This interpretation of the post-coital scene certainly is supported in the text which clearly states that the lovers had disrobed. A hot summer afternoon, lying with one’s lover beside a cool spring in a pleasant setting, and remembering the ecstasies just enjoyed is certainly a valid reading of this section of the *Razón*.

When the lady abruptly departs, the poet/lover is left “desconortado” (v. 143) (bereft). He is understandably tired after making love and tries to sleep. But a dove is flying above and the sight distracts him. Here the poet introduces elements of *fauna* into the scene as he begins the transition to that part of the poem in which water and wine debate. From remote antiquity the dove has been associated with love and the gods of love.<sup>455</sup> The poet’s audience would, of course, also have been familiar with the Christian association of the dove with the Holy Spirit and the poet uses these positive attributes of the bird to his advantage at the beginning of the debate section of the poem. This dove, however, has a gold bell tied about its leg.<sup>456</sup> Like the vessels of water and wine that catch the reader’s attention because they are not part of the natural landscape described in the poem, the bell on the leg of the dove is similarly unexpected. And, just as the vessels

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<sup>452</sup> Spitzer, “*Razón de amor*” (see note 408), 152. Franchini also places these lines within the traditions of the *cantigas d’amor* but insists that neither the lady nor her courtly lover would have consummated their union. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 348.

<sup>453</sup> Spitzer, “*Razón de amor*” (see note 408), 152.

<sup>454</sup> Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 91.

<sup>455</sup> Ferraresi, *De amor* (see note 400), 93.

<sup>456</sup> According to Spitzer the bell tied about the dove’s leg denotes that it is a messenger bird. “*Razón de amor*” (see note 408), 157–58.

suspended in the apple tree imply human manipulation, so too, the bell has been attached to the bird for some purpose foreign to its natural state.<sup>457</sup> Franchini,<sup>458</sup> Impey,<sup>459</sup> and Pacheco<sup>460</sup> see the dove as a transfiguration of the *doncella* who had also entered abruptly into the scene where the poet was taking a refreshing nap. Van Antwerp asserts that "Both the damsel and the bird intrude suddenly upon the poet's solitude and each causes an abrupt change in his announced plans."<sup>461</sup> Continuing this idea of parallels between the lady and the dove, Van Antwerp also relates the bell on the dove's leg to the folkloric motif of the *caza de amor* (love hunt) in which the beloved is often spoken of as a bird.<sup>462</sup> However, unlike the lady who did not flee when she encountered the poet/lover in the forest clearing, the bird is frightened by him and flies up into the tree where the two glasses are suspended. The text here states that the dove flies into a "malgranar" (v. 157) (pomegranate tree) instead of the "mançanar" (v. 13) (apple tree) where the two vessels were said to be resting at the beginning of the poem. Most critics feel that this discrepancy resulted from a scribal error but Ferraresi develops the idea that the confusion may have been influenced by verses from the *Song of Songs* in which the pairing of apple and pomegranate trees is symbolic of fecundity. This critic also cites Alfred Jacob who argues that the etymological confusion between *pomum* (meaning any fruit) and *malum* (any fleshy fruit) could have influenced the multiple names for the tree in the *Razón*. In French, *pomme* (apple) is derived from *pomum* and, in Spanish, *manzana* is derived from *malum*. Jacob contends that, if the poet was a Spanish translator who knew French, he could use easily either term since both the pomegranate and the apple could be described simply as fruits or as fleshy fruits.<sup>463</sup>

Whether the confusion in the names of the trees is a scribal error or not, the poet specifies the type of tree where the dove has alighted. The attention to details in the natural setting which characterizes the first section of the poem continues in

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<sup>457</sup> It is also worth noting that the bell and clapper have been used to represent the sexual organs. Otis Green, *Spain and the Western Tradition*, vol. I: *The Castilian Mind in Literature from El Cid to Calderón* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 58–59.

<sup>458</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 364.

<sup>459</sup> Impey, "La estructura" (see note 400), 17–18.

<sup>460</sup> Pacheco, "¿Razón de amor?" (see note 405), 13–14.

<sup>461</sup> Van Antwerp, "Razón de amor" (see note 404), 14.

<sup>462</sup> Franchini is not completely convinced that the dove with the bell is related to a hunting motif since he notes that usually raptors such as falcons and hawks were outfitted with bells rather than doves. In fact, he points out a much more chaste significance for the bell which would remind our young *escolar*, like church bells, of his duties to the church. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 381. I find this argument less than convincing because it sidesteps greater evidence that the scholar/poet has indeed made love to the young woman, a fact supported by Franchini's observation that the *doncella* is the hunter since she took the initiative in their lovemaking.

<sup>463</sup> Ferraresi, "De amor" (see note 400), 71.

the second, debate section of the *Razón*. This continuity of interest in elements of the natural world is another factor, in my opinion, that argues for unity between the two sections of the poem.

The dove, as we have seen, is scared away from the forest glen and the fresh water of the spring by the presence of the poet/lover there. The bird seeks out the cold water in the glass suspended in the tree. But, instead of drinking the water, the bird bathes in the glass, upsetting it when he flies out.<sup>464</sup> When the water falls into the wine, Spitzer asserts that the actions of the dove, although involuntary on its part, reflect “la volonté de Vénus” (the will of Venus).<sup>465</sup> Several critics, including Grieve<sup>466</sup> and Pacheco,<sup>467</sup> have pointed out that the cup of wine which was described as carefully covered to protect it from the sun—“cubierto era de-tal medida / no-lo tocas la calentura” (vv. 17–18) (it was covered in such a way so that the heat could not touch it)—has become mysteriously uncovered, thus permitting the water to dilute it. Pacheco reminds us that it is no coincidence that the cup loses its covering sometime during the narration of the love scene.<sup>468</sup> Van Antwerp calls the vessels of water and wine “erotically charged” and likens the mixing of the two liquids to the consummation of love described in the previous scene: “the previously unattainable water of satisfaction is mixed with the wine of desire.”<sup>469</sup> I believe that the uncovering of the vessel is directly related to the *doncella* losing her virginity as portrayed in the earlier scene. The removal of the cover of the cup can be likened to the breaking of the maidenhead and the mixing of water and wine extends the metaphor of sexual intimacy.

Water and wine would have also brought to mind a host of other possible associations for the poem’s audience. The spring water in the poem is cold and refreshing. The spring water is described as pure, like the *doncella* before her encounter with the poet. As we recall, the bird eagerly bathes in the water in the glass but, the poet rejects this water, fearing it may be enchanted. Water from the glass and from the spring here are associated respectively with the cleansing ritual of baptism as well as with quenching the thirst of desire. The symbolic associations with wine are also multifaceted. As part of the Eucharistic rite, wine

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<sup>464</sup> Franchini relates the dove bathing in the cup of water to the *baño de amor*, so prevalent in traditional lyric as a prelude to sex. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 374. And Gerli cites an *alba* from contemporary Yugoslav oral tradition which also alludes to a bird disturbing water: “A falcon flew down from the fortress, / With his wings disturbed the water, / The water can’t grow clear again, / Nor can you draw it while it’s muddy.” “Calisto’s Hawk” (see note 236), 94.

<sup>465</sup> Spitzer, “*Razón de amor*” (see note 408), 158.

<sup>466</sup> Grieve, “Through the Silver Goblet” (see note 426), 18.

<sup>467</sup> Pacheco, “¿*Razón de amor?*” (see note 405), 4.

<sup>468</sup> This critic also explains the folkloric practice of the bride offering the bridegroom a cup of wine which represented the sexual consummation of the marriage. Pacheco, “¿*Razón de amor?*” (see note 405), 12.

<sup>469</sup> Van Antwerp, “*Razón de amor*” (see note 404), 16.

becomes the blood of Christ and denotes both sacrifice and salvation. But wine is also the elixir of love and a prelude, or an inducement, to sexual activity.

The debate between water and wine immediately follows the scene of the dove whose actions caused the two liquids to be mixed.<sup>470</sup> As many scholars have pointed out, the debate section of the poem, the *Denuestos*, is an adaptation of the *Denudata vertiate*, a goliardic poem in Latin.<sup>471</sup> Franchini asserts that, in the goliardic tradition, there is no doubt that the mixing of water and wine served to symbolize coitus.<sup>472</sup> As we have seen, the mixing of the water and wine also has this meaning in the *Razón*.<sup>473</sup> But our poet and his audience were also keenly aware of religious allusions in mixing of the two liquids. During the mass, the priest mixes water and wine in preparation of the Eucharist. The poet, like his goliardic model, does not shy away from introducing religious imagery into erotic verse. Wine first accuses water of diluting it. Water immediately and pugnaciously replies, accusing the wine of being the real polluting factor. The power of wine to make men lose their wits and common sense is a popular motif reiterated here in the debate. If we follow the logic of the wine as symbol of the desired and desirous virgin, its association in the debate with sexual longing and the inebriating effects of love is not surprising. Wine tries to banish water, calling it “suzia” (v. 185) (dirty), and says that it turns lovely red liquids yellowish. It is noteworthy, too, that the water that is speaking in the debate is that contained in the cup suspended in the tree, the same water that the poet chose not to drink because he feared it was enchanted. This water, now being accused by wine of being dirty, is contrasted with the fresh, cool water of the spring which the poet/lover drank with delight at the beginning of the poem. Wine again alludes to its great power, greater even than Samson’s, to which water replies that wine’s only power is to make people fall down in the mud and see double:

no-lo prenda ni[n]guno de la mano,  
e si-antes d’una pasada no cayere en-el lodo,  
dios ssodes de tod en-todo(do).  
E si-esto fazedes,  
otorgo que uençudam auedes:  
en-una blanca paret  
cinco kandelas ponet,

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<sup>470</sup> Spitzer sees the position of this debate in the poem as entirely logical and in keeping with the medieval debate poetry—a dialectic to conciliate contrary elements by justifying two polar extremes. “*Razón de amor*” (see note 408), 158.

<sup>471</sup> See Franchini, Spitzer, Pacheco, and Ferraresi.

<sup>472</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 388.

<sup>473</sup> As part of his efforts to justify a religious/*fin amors* reading of the *Razón*, Franchini argues that the mixing of water and wine in medieval iconography was symbolic of the virtue of temperance. *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 392.

e si-el-beudo non dixiere que son ciento (vv. 221–28).

[if you take anyone by the hand  
in a single step, he'll fall in the mud,  
you're very much like a god.  
And if you do this  
I grant that you have won  
if on a white wall  
you hang five candles  
the drunkard will say there are a hundred.].

Wine replies with accusations that, since water is used to clean, it always ends up dirty and sullied. Wine then touts its association with Christian religious practice stating that it is the substance of the Eucharist (v. 251) but water retorts that it is associated with baptism. Thus, rather than avoiding the obvious Christian symbolism of wine and water, the debaters themselves include this information in keeping with the goliardic fashion of profaning the sacred.<sup>474</sup> The poem ends with the poet requesting wine. Such a request is not only a common ending for recited verse but also indicates that the wine of love and desire has triumphed.

The *Razón* is a unified poem in which a description of a meeting of two lovers is amplified and recapitulated in a debate between water and wine.<sup>475</sup> The poet adopts several narrative voices—the singer who introduces the poem, the poet/lover of the scene in the forest glen, and the personified voices of water and wine—to present different perspectives on the central theme of desire and sexual fulfillment. The poet of *Razón* borrows from a host of rhetorical devices and poetic traditions, such as the *locus amoenus*, courtly love lyric, *cantigas d'amigo*, goliardic verse, and debate. He also employs Christian and classical symbolic associations and imagery. All these factors have been identified by other critics and I agree that they affected the poem's composition. However, a careful reading of the natural world described in sections of the poem also reveals a poet clearly concerned with describing the natural environment in great detail. For example, the forest clearing where the two lovers meet is carefully painted—the spring, the trees, the flowers, and birds. While not denying the rhetorical models for these descriptions, my reading does not divorce them from the poet's experience with the natural world. He constructs his variation on a *locus amoenus* by carefully choosing elements that will not only delight the lovers in the poem but also implicitly guide his audience to an appreciation of the poem's celebration of sexual delight. Into this carefully-constructed scenario, he introduces objects foreign to nature, such as the two cups and the bell tied to the leg of the dove. The natural and altogether pleasant setting

<sup>474</sup> Franchini, *El manuscrito* (see note 340), 390.

<sup>475</sup> On this point, see Spitzer, "*Razón de amor*" (see note 408), 160.

of the forest glen for the lovers' meeting is tarnished by the introduction from elements from the outside world and the lovers' activities here are the catalyst for the allegorical debate between water and wine. In the debate section of the poem, the poet continues to use elements of the natural world—the dove and the trees—to stage the exchange between water and wine. The description of natural elements is one of the factors that binds the two sections of the poem together to create a unified and coherent narrative.



## Chapter Eight

### Idealized Countryside: *Laus Hispaniae* in *Poema de Fernán González* and *Estoria de España*

The praise of Spain appears in a number of Spanish literary works and chronicles. This chapter will treat two of the best known versions of this encomium which highlights the natural wonders and prosperity of Spain. A *laus Hispaniae* is found in the *Poema de Fernán González* (ca. 1250–1252) in strophes 145–59, and in chapter 558 of the *Estoria de España* or *Primera crónica general* (1270–1284) compiled by Alfonso X, el Sabio. These two thirteenth-century Castilian versions share much in common but there are also noteworthy differences.

By the time these two works were composed, the *laus Hispaniae* was well-established as a literary trope, first appearing in works of classical antiquity and continued in medieval chronicles composed in Latin.<sup>476</sup> As with the concept of the *locus amoenus* previously discussed, we are faced with how to approach, from an ecocritical perspective, what had become, by the thirteenth century, a literary set piece. Even though certain natural elements are consistently present in the *laus hispaniae*, it is important to analyze these features and try to understand why they were enshrined as essential to this *topos*. In other words, what are the specific geographic features, natural elements, and other phenomena that came to make up the panegyric to Spain and why were these repeated by so many authors?

Curtius speaks of the eulogy of places as an outgrowth of classical panegyric. Places were praised for their beauty, fertility, and healthful properties.<sup>477</sup> Nagore de Zand, in her study of the *laus Hispaniae*, adds that praise of place formed part of the rhetorical exercise for writers of classical antiquity for describing places or personages at length. She asserts that the *laus Hispaniae* with its encomiastic tone,

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<sup>476</sup> For a complete listing of the *laus Hispaniae* in classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Josefina Nagore de Zand's two-part article, "La alabanza de España en el *Poema de Fernán González* y en las crónicas latino-medievales," *Incipit* 7 (1987): 35–67; 9 (1989): 13–31.

<sup>477</sup> Curtius, *European Literature* (see note 38), 157–58. Curtius cites as a primary example the *laus Hispaniae* with which St. Isidore begins his chronicle.

minute attention to description, careful elaboration, and prescribed length were conceived as a content unit.<sup>478</sup> This critic claims that the *laus Hispaniae* can be studied as an entity apart from the larger context in which it appears. Even though the *laus Hispaniae* existed as a rhetorical exercise with certain obligatory features, I do not think it can be divorced from its larger textual context in the cases of the *Poema de Fernán González*<sup>479</sup> and the *Estoria de España*.<sup>480</sup> The authors of the *PFG* and the *EE* adapted the *laus Hispaniae* in their own ways to suit their own ends. By careful examination of the natural features included and the nuanced differences in these two thirteenth-century Castilian versions, we have clues to what these authors considered important features of their surroundings and how they manipulated these features for a specific purpose.

The *laus Hispaniae* in the *PFG* and the *EE* both reflected and promoted a sense of national consciousness among their audiences. I use the term, national consciousness, not as an anachronism but as it is defined by Gifford Davis: "a realization by a group of humanity of collective attributes, common past and traditions and common goals and inspiration."<sup>481</sup> In the thirteenth-century national consciousness in Spain was closely related to a kind of Christian patriotism.<sup>482</sup> This sense of national unity is apparent in the *PFG* and the *EE* where the *laus Hispaniae* is positioned after an account of an invasion of Spain by an outside foe. In the *EE*, the *laus Hispaniae* appears after the invasion of the peninsula by the Moors in 711 and, in the *PFG*, after Charlemagne's unsuccessful incursion into Spain. The threat from outside enemies evokes a sense of unity and common identity that the authors express through encomia of Spain.

There are numerous versions of the *laus Hispaniae* in medieval Latin chronicles such as those of Lucas of Tuy and Jiménez de Rada which were probably known by the authors of the *PFG* and the *EE*. Another important precursor for these writers was the encomium to Spain included by Isidore of Seville in his sixth-century *Historia gothorum*.<sup>483</sup> But there are notable differences between these peninsular forerunners of the *laus Hispaniae* and the versions included in our thirteenth-century texts. For example, the latter emphasize that Spanish Christians share a common past, whereas earlier works confine their comments to the land itself, blessed with good climate, fertility, abundant animals, and rich minerals.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Nagore de Zand, "La alabanza," 1987 (see note 476), 37.

<sup>479</sup> Hereafter *PFG*.

<sup>480</sup> Hereafter *EE*.

<sup>481</sup> Gifford Davis, "The Development of National Themes in Medieval Castilian Literature," *Hispanic Review* 3.2 (1935): 149–61; here 149.

<sup>482</sup> Davis, "The Development" (see note 481), 149.

<sup>483</sup> Strophes 145–158. See John Lihani, *Poema de Fernán González*, *Medieval Texts and Studies*, 4 (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991), xxviii.

<sup>484</sup> Davis, "The Development" (see note 481), 148.

The *PFG* celebrates the life of the Count who first won Castilian independence from León and manifests a pronounced sense of Castilian identity. The poet, probably a monk with ties to the monastery of San Pedro de Arlanza, relies heavily on the communal memory of history and of shared identity on the part of his Castilian audience. The *PFG* begins by describing the homeland of Fernán González as “la tierra toda de mar a mar” (2d) (the whole land from sea to sea).<sup>485</sup> The land referred to in this verse represents the physical territory in possession of the Goths to which they gave the name of “España.”<sup>486</sup> But the poet does not actually use the name “España” to describe the land of Spain until verse 14b. He does, however, repeat the phrase, “de mar a mar” (from sea to sea) in verse 19a when he speaks of the Visigoths entering Spain and establishing their kingdom there. This phrase is particularly noteworthy because the poet does not initially position Spain in terms of its European neighbors but rather as a place bounded by two seas. This description implies a preoccupation with the vulnerability of Spain to invasion by sea, especially by those on the other side of the Mediterranean, i.e., the Moors.<sup>487</sup> Deyermond asserts that the *laus Hispaniae* in the *PFG* reflects, in part, a keen consciousness of the contrast between the largely-imagined glories of the Visigothic past and the harsh and conflictive reality of the Christian kings and the invading Arabs.<sup>488</sup>

After a quick summary of Spanish history and immediately following an account of the defeat of Charlemagne, the poet includes 14 four-verse strophes which comprise his *laus Hispaniae* (strophes 145–159). According to Menéndez Pidal, the most immediate source for the *laus hispaniae* in the *PFG* is the *Chronicon mundi* (1236) of Lucas of Tuy, but C. Carroll Marden, in his 1904 edition of the poem, asserts that many of the details found in the poem hark directly back to Isidore and speculates that the author may have had access to both Isidore and the Tudense when he composed this portion of the epic.<sup>489</sup> According to Davis, Lucas of Tuy’s version of the *laus Hispaniae*, has a more religious tone than that of St. Isidore.<sup>490</sup> For example, the *Chronicon mundi* claims that Spain is especially privileged because of its relation to Sts. Paul and James. While there is little

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<sup>485</sup> This and all subsequent references are to Juan Victorio’s edition of the *Poema de Fernán González*. Letras Hispánicas, 151 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998). References are to verse number(s).

<sup>486</sup> Joseph Aguado, “La Historia, la Reconquista y el protonacionalismo en el *Poema de Fernán González*,” *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 3 (1999): 17–31; here 18.

<sup>487</sup> Aguado, “La Historia” (see note 486), 18.

<sup>488</sup> Alan D. Deyermond, *Historia de la literatura española: La Edd Media* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1985), 76.

<sup>489</sup> Alonso Zamora Vicente, *Poema de Fernán González: Edición, prólogo y notas*. Clásicos Castellanos, 128 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1963), 44.

<sup>490</sup> Davis, “The Development” (see note 481), 150.

evidence to uphold a visit by St. Paul to Spain,<sup>491</sup> the legendary burial place of St. James in Santiago de Compostela and the saint's miraculous interventions in battles during the Reconquest were firmly rooted in the Spanish psyche. Lucas of Tuy speaks of other saints martyred in Spain as well as the philosophers, historians, poets, and emperors who were from Spain. According to Davis, "Isidore had begun by a praise of Mother Spain and had confined his praise to physical advantages. Lucas de Tuy opens by considering the special privileges of the Fatherland of the Spaniards and devotes himself primarily to the great figures of the Spanish tradition."<sup>492</sup> As we shall see, even though the *laus Hispaniae* in the *PFG* does not emphasize the great figures as did Lucas of Tuy, it does share with the Latin chronicle a religious tone and promotes a sense of shared Christian identity among Castilians. Davis calls the praise of Spain in the *PFG* "far simpler and more naïve" than the previous ones found in the *Tudense* or in Isidore.<sup>493</sup> Such a criticism, however, does not take into account the poet's purpose of fostering Castilian consciousness and, to that end, focusing on elements in his environment that specifically promote this sense of shared identity.

The author of the *PFG* begins his *laus Hispaniae* by pronouncing Spain to be the best of all lands:

Por esso vos lo digo que bien lo entendades:  
 mejor es que otras tierras en las que vos morades,  
 de todo es bien conplida en la que vos estades,  
 dezir vos e agora quantas ha de bondades. (145abcd)<sup>494</sup>

[I tell you so that you may well understand:  
 it is better than any other place where you may live,  
 richly endowed in all good things,  
 and I will now tell you about its bounty.]

Julian Weiss analyzes the representation of land ("tierras" in verse 145b above) in the *PFG* from two perspectives. The first of these is as a political space: "land in the sense of a geopolitical or national space whose boundaries need to be defined and protected."<sup>495</sup> The second is the usage of land in "its agricultural sense as a

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<sup>491</sup> Lucas de Tuy bases Spain's association with St. Paul on Romans 15:24: "... I would like to see you on my way to Spain, and be helped by you to go there, after I have enjoyed visiting you for a while." Davis, "The Development" (see note 481), 151.

<sup>492</sup> Davis, "The Development" (see note 481), 151.

<sup>493</sup> Davis, "The Development" (see note 481), 154.

<sup>494</sup> But, as we will see, the poet modifies this stance in strophe 157 and 158 to proclaim that, of all the places in Spain, Castile is superior.

<sup>495</sup> Julian Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía: Intellectuals and Ideologies in Thirteenth-Century Castille* (Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2006), 149.

material productive force, the prime source of wealth under feudalism."<sup>496</sup> The second use of the word 'land,' in an agricultural sense, is especially important for an ecocritical reading of the *laus Hispaniae* and, undoubtedly, the poem's audience would share this dual concept of their "tierras"—i.e., as both homeland and as lands where they toiled daily. Weiss also identifies an internal structure in the *laus Hispaniae* organized around the division of society into the three castes of peasants, warriors, and priests.<sup>497</sup>

The first six strophes of the *laus Hispaniae* (145–52), devoted to the fertility of Spanish lands and the abundance of its minerals, cattle, fruit, fish, and game is most-closely associated with peasants and traders.<sup>498</sup> In this section of the *laus Hispaniae*, the poet relies on farmers' intimate connections to the land and reminds them of Spain's bounty. He speaks of the land's temperate climate, declaring that Spain suffers neither extremes of heat or cold. Its pastures are without par and its fruit trees abundant: "non es tierra en el mundo que aya tales pasturas, / arboles pora fruta siquier de mil naturas" (76, 146cd) (there is no land on earth that has such pastures, / fruit trees of a thousand species). He declares the mountains to be the finest feature of the country: "Sobre todas las tierras mejor es la montaña" (76, 147a) (Of all the lands the mountains are the best). The land is blessed with so many fine cows, sheep, and pigs that "sirven se muchas tierras de las cosas d'España" (76, 147d) (Spain provides things for many other lands). From the outset, the *laus Hispaniae* emphasizes that Spain is endowed with such an abundance of natural resources, agricultural products, and livestock that it not only meets the needs of its own people but has surplus to export to its less fortunate neighbors.<sup>499</sup>

The poem next declares that Spain is a primary producer of linen and wool cloth, manufactured from flax and sheep's wool respectively. In this section of the *laus Hispaniae* the poet moves beyond the deep ecological approach expressed in the initial strophes where he extols the riches of the natural environment to adopt a more anthropocentric view as he celebrates exploiting natural resources to produce man-made goods. He continues in this vein in the remainder of the strophe, speaking next of wax production and the pressing of olives for oil. The strophe ends with the poet bragging that Spanish oil far exceeds that produced in either England or France: "non seria d'azeite en mundo tal fallada, / Inglatierra nin Francia d'esto es abundada" (148cd) (you cannot find such oil elsewhere / it

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<sup>496</sup> Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 149.

<sup>497</sup> Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 155.

<sup>498</sup> Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 155.

<sup>499</sup> Weiss observes that "some of the goods mentioned (wool, wax, salt, dye, and oil) constituted Iberia's principal exports in the burgeoning commercial activity of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries." *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 155.

supplies both England and France). Here the poem specifically marks Spain as superior to two of its closest, and most formidable, European neighbors.<sup>500</sup>

Hunting is another human activity lauded in strophe 149. The abundance of wildlife, especially deer, is specifically cited. Also, fishing in the seas and rivers provides a rich harvest of both fresh and preserved fish: “quien los quiere rezientes, quien los quiere salados” (149c) (whether one wants them fresh or wants them salted). The next strophe turns to the production of two staples of life—water and wine. Spanish wines and breads are touted as the best in the entire world: “non fallarien en mundo otra mejor nin tal” (150b) (there can be found none better in the world). The poet then returns to the rich natural features themselves, praising the springs and rivers. He next speaks of the land’s minerals and specifically refers to salt, a staple for food preparation and essential for preserving the abundant game and fish previously mentioned. Strophe 151 specifically mentions the great economic value of other minerals found in Spain, including rich veins of iron ore, silver, and gold—“son de mejor barata” (151a)<sup>501</sup> (they are of great price). Natural elements in this section of the *laus* are praised for their utility to humans and potential for producing wealth.

Strophe 151 returns to an enumeration of natural features of the land and refers specifically to the plains and valleys “de buena mata” (151c). “Mata” is defined in the *Tentative Dictionary of Medieval Spanish* as a “porción de terreno poblado de árboles” (a piece of land populated with trees).<sup>502</sup> The PFG describes the land and its resources in terms of measured expanses of territory, each characterized by different natural elements. The plains and valleys not only boast great forests but they are also rich in the production of “grana.” “Grana” is defined as crimson, a red dye made from the dried bodies of the scale insect, Kermes (in the order of Hemiptera). Kermes also denotes the type of oak (kermes, or Spanish, oak—*Quercus Coccifera*) found in the Mediterranean area on which these insects feed. The implication is that the “matas,” or groves of trees, alluded to in the previous verse are the oak trees on which the insects for producing crimson thrive. In the Middle Ages, crimson was a highly-prized commodity if we

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<sup>500</sup> This factor which leads Aguado to assert: “no es descabellado reconocer ciertas características protonacionales recogidas y manifestadas por el PFG y sobre las que finalmente acabará asentándose la idea de nación” (it isn’t too farfetched to recognize certain protonational characteristics manifest in the PFG upon which the idea of the nation ultimately will be based). “La Historia” (see note 486), 27.

<sup>501</sup> Victorio translates “barata” as “ley, precio” (of legal quality, price). *Poema de Fernán González* (see note 485), 77, fn. 151a. Zamora Vicente in his edition of the PFG defines it as “precio, valor” (price, value). *Poema de Fernán González* (see note 489), 46, fn. 150b.

<sup>502</sup> Lloyd A. Katen and Florian J. Cody, *Tentative Dictionary of Medieval Spanish* (second ed. greatly expanded). Spanish Series, 123 (New York: The Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 2000), 451.

judge by the abundant references to it.<sup>503</sup> We read, for example, in Don Manuel's *El libro del caballero et del escudero* (1236): "Et en esto coscoios ay en algunas tierras que naçe gran, que es cosa muy aprovechosa" (And about this there are bushes in some lands where crimson comes from, a most valuable thing).<sup>504</sup> Victorio confirms that crimson dye for cloth was very highly valued and trade in it was highly profitable.<sup>505</sup> It was so valuable that its export was prohibited in the thirteenth century.<sup>506</sup> The inclusion of "grana" in this *laus Hispaniae* equates trees and their insects with great economic potential. Ironically, a natural parasite—the kermes—is defined as potentially more valuable than the oak trees on which it feeds.

Spanish horses are the subject of strophe 152. They are described in superlatives and are said to be unequalled in the world: "nunca tales caveros en el mundo non viemos" (152d) (we have never seen such horses in other places on earth). We should not be surprised that an epic poem would devote an entire strophe of the *laus Hispaniae* to horses, essential to battle. In his analysis of the *laus Hispaniae* in relation to the feudal caste system, Weiss identifies this section with the warrior class or *caballeros*. He specifically sees this strophe as a "reference to the Visigothic military heritage."<sup>507</sup> Fernán González as military leader, mounted on one of the finest horses in the world, will return Spain to the (mythic) glories of its Visigothic past. On a symbolic level, the horse, especially a white one, is associated with individuals who are worthy and truthful, and with Christ himself. Fernán González, throughout the poem, is portrayed as a messianic figure, a mounted warrior who will save Castile.<sup>508</sup>

The third section of the *laus Hispaniae* recognizes saintly figures from Spain's past. In his organizational scheme for the *laus Hispaniae* Weiss associates this section with the caste of priests.<sup>509</sup> The poet first turns his attention to the tomb of

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<sup>503</sup> Zamora Vicente, *Poema de Fernán González* (see note 489), 46, fn.150d.

<sup>504</sup> Zamora Vicente, *Poema de Fernán González* (see note 489), 46, fn.150d.

<sup>505</sup> Victorio, *Poema de Fernán González* (see note 485), 77, fn.151d.

<sup>506</sup> Zamora Vicente, *Poema de Fernán González* (see note 489), 46, fn.150d.

<sup>507</sup> Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 156.

<sup>508</sup> The association of Fernán González with Christ and the Castilian count's army with the Christian army that appears mounted on white horses in the Book of Revelation may also have informed the praise of the Spanish horse in this *laus Hispaniae*. Pérez-Rioja, *Diccionario* (see note 51), 104. Also see Beverly West, *Epic, Folk, and Christian Traditions in the Poema de Fernán González* (Potomac, MD: Studia Humanitatis, 1983), 10–13. For a confirmation of the international reputation of Spanish horses, e.g., in medieval German literature, see Albrecht Classen, "Spain and Germany in the Middle Ages: An Unexplored Literary-Historical Area of Exchange, Reception, and Exploration," *The Lion and the Eagle: Interdisciplinary Essays on German-Spanish Relations over the Centuries*, ed. Conrad Kent, Thomas K. Wolber, and Cameron M. K. Hewitt (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 47–76; here 63–64.

<sup>509</sup> Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 156.

St. James in Santiago de Compostela. He contends that the saint was sent to Spain by God as a special gesture to honor the land: “Fuerte mient quiso Dios a España honrar, / quand al santo apostol quiso y enbiar” (154ab) (God wanted to especially honor Spain, / when he sent the sainted apostle there). As found earlier in strophe 148 when the poet spoke about the superiority of Spanish agricultural production to that of England or France, he here again negatively contrasts England and France with Spain stating that none of Christ’s apostles are buried in those countries. Spain alone houses the tomb of one of the twelve: “d’Inglaterra e França quiso la mejorar, / sabet, non yaz apostol en todo aquel logar” (he wanted her to be better than England or France, / you know that no apostle lies in those places). The inclusion of St. James in a text from thirteenth-century Spain is not only common but *de rigueur*. *Santiago Matamoros* (St. James the Moor-slayer) was a symbol of divine help for Christian armies in the Reconquest. In fact, later in the poem, in strophe 561, St. James appears to Fernán González and brings a heavenly army to help the count defeat the invading army of Moors led by Almanzor. In this instance, material found in the *laus Hispaniae* serves to prefigure events that will occur later in the body of the text.

The next strophe, no. 155, continues the theme of Spain’s favored status among Christian lands. The poet reminds his readers/listeners that many martyrs, confessors, and saintly virgins died for their faith in Spain. The mention of clergy, martyrs, and saints is a much abbreviated version of the lists of specific illustrious Spaniards found in the *laus Hispaniae* of the Tudense. The poet of the *PFG* appears less interested in citing particular names, geneologies, or miracles than Lucas of Tuy and limits himself to citing categories of religious figures from Spain—saints, virgins, confessors—most of whom suffered violent martyrdom.<sup>510</sup> The poet speaks in general terms about Spain as bastion of Christianity and privileges the special role of Fernán González among Spanish defenders of the faith. The Count of Castile is portrayed as standing on the shoulders of the apostle St. James and all those Christian saints and martyrs who had sacrificed themselves on Spanish soil.

Strophe 156 claims that Spain is not only the best country among its neighbors but that the Spanish people are superior to peoples of all other lands. The poet praises the Spanish people as prudent (“sesudos”), inherently discreet (“mesura heredades”), and worthy of esteem (“muy grand preçio ganades”) (156cd). Weiss notes that *mesura* is traditionally identified as one of the heroic virtues and its specific inclusion here in the *laus Hispaniae* is significant in a poem celebrating the founder of Castilian independence. He also sees a relationship between the character trait of *mesura* and the description of Spain’s balanced and moderate

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<sup>510</sup> Nagore de Zand, “La alabanza,” 1987 (see note 476), 59.

climate that “forges an associative link between the people and the land.”<sup>511</sup> And Nagore de Zand identifies other episodes in the *PFG* when *mesura* is defined as a positive character trait.<sup>512</sup> The specific mention of *mesura* as a primary characteristic of Spaniards departs slightly from the traits most often cited in the probable sources for the *laus Hispaniae*. These emphasize Spaniards’ physical strength and prowess in battle but, as Nagore de Zand points out, the many combat scenes in the *PFG* provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate the bravery of the Spaniards in battle and thus it is not necessary to allude to it in the *laus Hispaniae*.<sup>513</sup>

The *laus* shifts gears in the next two strophes. Rather than praising Spain and the Spaniards in general, the poet turns his attention specifically to Castile, pronouncing it the best amongst all the kingdoms of Spain. He states in verse 157a, “Pero de toda España Castiella es mejor” (79) (But in all of Spain Castile is the best). With this verse the poet ends his adaptation of the traditional *laus Hispaniae* and centers on Castile.<sup>514</sup> Castile has enjoyed special grace from God because it has always been a bastion of the Christian faith: “guardando e temiendo sienpre a su señor, / quiso acreçentar la assi el Criador” (157cd) (guarding and fearing always the Lord, / so the Creator wanted to make her prosper). Strophe 158 specifies that the Castile referred to in the poem is Castilla la Vieja whose people, although few in number, conquered many others.<sup>515</sup> These lines are significant in that they praise not only Castile’s major contributions to the efforts of the Reconquest but also imply that this kingdom will assume leadership over all the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. Significantly, this privileging of Castile is not present in the *laus Hispaniae* of the *EE* where Alfonso’s main purpose is to promote unity of interest among his diverse kingdoms.<sup>516</sup> By contrast, in the *PFG*, Castile is the only kingdom in Spain that truly embodies her heroic past. It is noteworthy that, outside of the *laus Hispaniae* section, the *PFG* largely reserves the

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<sup>511</sup> Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 156. However, Weiss points out that only knights and holy men are assigned these specific character traits. The peasants who work the land praised in the *laus Hispaniae* are not mentioned: “the existence of actual peasants has been silenced, their toil utterly assimilated into either the forces of production (the land) or the commodities and goods they produce (textiles, cattle, etc.). Yet, as the internal structure of the *laus* demonstrates, their work is foundational: the description of the land and its material resources takes up half of the eulogy itself.” Weiss, *The Mester de Clerecía* (see note 495), 156.

<sup>512</sup> Nagore de Zand, “La alabanza,” 1987 (see note 476), 47–48.

<sup>513</sup> Nagore de Zand, “La alabanza,” 1987 (see note 476), 47.

<sup>514</sup> Nagore de Zand notes the significance of beginning the praise of Castile with the conjunction, “pero” (but) which establishes an opposition between the preceding eulogy and the one that follows. “La alabanza,” 1987 (see note 476), 50.

<sup>515</sup> This is the only instance in the *laus Hispaniae* of the *PFG* where a reference to prowess in war is mentioned. Nagore de Zand, “La alabanza,” 1987 (see note 476), 50.

<sup>516</sup> Nagore de Zand, “La alabanza,” 1987 (see note 476), 49.

use of the term “Spain” for references to the country before the Muslim invasion or during the incursion of Charlemagne into the peninsula.<sup>517</sup> The preferred term used by the poet to exalt the exploits of Fernán González in all other cases is “Castile.”

The *laus Hispaniae* ends with the poet announcing that he will abbreviate this part of the poem for fear of erring if he continues. This is the second time the poet uses this justification for breaking off his praise of the land. Previously in 153b he states, “non quiero mas dezier, que podrie ser errado” (77) (I don’t want to say more, for I might err) and now, in 159b, he repeats the same sentiment: “temo, si mas dixesse que podria herrar” (79) (I fear, if I say more, I might fall into error). Since he has spoken of Spain’s climate, natural resources, agricultural production, and people in such superlative terms it is somewhat ironic that he abruptly ends the *laus Hispaniae* by stating that he does not want to overstate his case.

The poet then returns to a summary of Spanish history prior to the time of Fernán González. The insertion of the *laus Hispaniae* at this point in the poem helps to unite the memory of Spain’s past greatness, especially during the Visigothic era, with the thirteenth-century idea of Castilian leadership in the peninsula. According to Aguado, the poem mixes the Eulogy of Spain with the narration of epic adventures to present new political ideas.<sup>518</sup> The *laus Hispaniae* was part of the collective consciousness that the poet of Arlanza especially wanted to promote amongst Castilians in his poem about the heroic first Count of Castile.

The poem begins by praising the fecundity of the land itself and then moves on to a praise of its heroes and martyrs who were nurtured in the rich soil of Castile. The sources for Spain’s greatness are her climate, natural resources, agricultural and livestock production, and mineral wealth. These natural blessings, combined with the faith and goodness of her people, are evidence of God’s grace toward Spain in contrast to her inferior neighbors, such as England, France, and the Moors of North Africa.

Alfonso X’s concern for establishing centralized royal authority in the Spanish kingdoms under his reign informed much of his administrative policy as well as the historical and legal treatises he compiled. To this end, he included a *laus Hispanie* in his history of Spain, the *Estoria de España* (also known as the *Primera Crónica General*) as part of an effort to foster a sense of national consciousness. As noted earlier, the *laus* in the *EE* is included directly after the description of the invasion and subsequent loss of the Visigothic kingdoms to the Moors. The sources for this *laus Hispaniae*, included as Chapter 558 of the *EE*, are numerous. They include some of the same works identified as probable sources for the *laus Hispaniae* found in the *PFG*. These include Isidore of Seville’s *Historia de regibus*

<sup>517</sup> Nagore de Zand, “La alabanza,” 1987 (see note 476), 51.

<sup>518</sup> Aguado, “La Historia” (see note 486), 28.

*gothorum*, Lucas of Tuy's *Chronicon mundi*, Jiménez de Rada's *De rebus Hispaniae* as well as earlier versions from classical antiquity.<sup>519</sup>

The *laus Hispaniae* in the *EE* begins with a reminder of the greatness of the Visigoths and a lament for their defeat at the hands of the Moors. The *laus* gives a veritable litany of the lands conquered by the Goths: "Scicia, Ponto, Asia, Grecia, Macedonia, Illirico . . . Babilonna . . . Media . . . et Yrcania" (310).<sup>520</sup> Finally, the Goths even overcame the powerful Roman empire: "aquella yente a la que los de Roma que eran sennores de toda la tierra fincaron los ynoios connosciendo se les por uençudos" (310) (even the great lords of all the land, the Romans, had to bow down to that people [i.e. the Goths] knowing they were conquered). The *EE* perpetuates the old myth of the kings of León and Castile as legitimate inheritors of the lineage of the Visigoths. As descendents of the last peninsular dynasty, they claimed hegemony over other sovereigns of Spain.<sup>521</sup> Alfonso's lengthy enumeration of the conquests and superiority of the Visigoths posits "la muy noble yente de los godos" (310) (the very noble Gothic people) as the last rightful Christian rulers in Spain before the usurpation of power by the Moors. Alfonso uses this idea of "neogoticismo"<sup>522</sup> to position himself as the restorer of Christian unity in the peninsula. The *EE* systematically subordinates the history of the Arabs to those of the Visigoths, thus paving the way for Alfonso to justify the need for Reconquest based not just on territorial rights but also on ethnic privilege.<sup>523</sup> As in the *laus Hispaniae* in the *PFG*, the version in the *EE* relies heavily on religious rhetoric. Despite the many victories won by the Visigoths, they were destroyed by the Moors and, according to the *EE*, their defeat should remind us that God controls the fate of all nations.<sup>524</sup>

The *EE* segues from the general concept of the all-encompassing power of God in the affairs of all nations to state that God has endowed all lands on earth with specific gifts. But of all the nations He has favored, Spain enjoys the lion's share

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<sup>519</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan. *The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, 138–39. Deyermond, *Historia* (see note 488), 158.

<sup>520</sup> All citations are from the *Estoria de España* are from the edition by Menéndez Pidal on-line from American Libraries Internet Archives (<http://www.archive.org/details/primeracrnica01sanccoog>; last accessed on August 17, 2012. Originally printed as *Primera crónica general ó sea Estoria de España que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1289* (Madrid: Bailly-Baillière é hijos, 1906).

<sup>521</sup> Georges Martin, "El modelo historiográfico alfonsí y sus antecedentes," *La historia alfonsí: el modelo y sus destinos (siglos XIII–XV)*, ed. Georges Martin. Collection de la Casa de Velázquez, 68 (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2000): 9–40; here 24.

<sup>522</sup> Martin, "El modelo historiográfico" (see note 521), 24.

<sup>523</sup> Martin, "El modelo historiográfico" (see note 521), 24.

<sup>524</sup> He is the arbitrator of the destiny of "todos pueblos et todas las yentes, los regnos, los languages . . ." (I, 311) (all lands and all people, the kingdoms, the languages . . .).

of God's bounty and grace: "entre todas las tierras que ell onrro mas, Espanna la de occidente fue; ca a esta abasto el de todas aquellas cosas que omne suel cobdiar" (311) (among all the lands that He honored, Spain in the West was the most greatly honored; for He endowed her with all the things that one could desire). Spain is presented not only as the land most favored by God but also the envy of all others. After this statement, the compilers return to the legacy of the Visigoths who, after conquering peoples far and wide, decided to settle in Spain because "era el mejor de todos, et muchol precieron mas que a ninguno de los otros, ca entre todas las tierras del mundo Espanna a una estremaça de abondamiento et de bondad mas que otra tierra ninguna" (311) (it was the best of all and they valued it more than all the others, for among all the lands of the earth Spain is the more richly endowed and more virtuous than any other). The repetitive syntax leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to the superiority of Spain to any other land on earth.<sup>525</sup>

The *laus Hispaniae* next emphasizes the territorial integrity of Spain. Territorial identity as a means to organize historical material is not unique to the *EE*.<sup>526</sup> As we have seen in the *PFG*, Spain is first described as "la tierra toda de mar a mar" (2d) (the whole land from sea to sea). In the *laus Hispaniae* of the *EE*, the borders of Spain are more clearly delineated. It is bounded on the north by the Pyrenees, on the west by the Atlantic, and on the east and south by the Mediterranean (311). An interesting digression in the *EE*, not found in the *PFG*, is a claim to Spanish sovereignty over lands outside of these boundaries that rightfully belong to Spain by virtue of having been formerly under Visigothic control:

Demas es en esta Espanna la Gallia Gothica que es la prouincia de Narbona dessouno con las cibdades Rodes, Albia et Beders, que en el tiempo de los godos perteneskien a esta misma prouincia. Otrossi en Affrica auie una prouincia sennora de diez cibdades que fue llamada Tingintana, que era so el sennorio de los godos assi como todas estas otras. (311)

[Also in this Spain are Gothic Gaul that is in the province of Narbonne along with the cities of Rhodes, Albi and Beders that in the time of the Goths belonged to this same province. Also in Africa it has a señorial province of ten cities that was called Tangiers that was under the rule of the Goths as were all these others.]

This claim to territories outside of the Iberian Peninsula was important for Alfonso as he made his bid to be named Holy Roman Emperor and for his claim to lands in Northern Africa.

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<sup>525</sup> Nagore de Zand identifies many direct translations from the *laus Hispaniae* of Lucas of Tuy in the *EE* but also notes that the Alfonsine writers add to their source by the process of *amplificatio*. "La alabanza," 1989 (see note 476), 18.

<sup>526</sup> For a discussion of organization criteria for the writing of histories, see Martin, "El modelo historiográfico" (see note 521), 25.

After defining all lands once controlled by the Visigoths as part of Spain the compilers proclaim the country to be “como el parayso de Dios” (311) (like the Paradise of God). It is watered by five rivers,<sup>527</sup> perhaps in this way even surpassing the Garden of Eden that, according to Genesis 2:10, was watered by four rivers. Between the rivers are great mountains, valleys, and wide plains. These fertile lands are irrigated by streams and springs and no place is without a well for fresh water. The land produces abundant amounts of grain and fruit while the rivers are full of fish. The milk produced is “sabrosa” (311) (delicious) as are all the by-products made from it. The land is rich in wild game, livestock, horses, and mules. Since the *EE* is not concerned with the promotion of a national hero, it does not single out horses or *cabelleros* for special attention as does the *laus Hispaniae* included in the *PFG*.

The *EE*, like the *PFG*, emphasizes the fine wines and breads of Spain. In addition to the affluence of agricultural production and livestock, the land is rich in minerals, specifically lead, tin, mercury, iron ore, copper, silver, gold, precious stones, and marble. Salt is harvested from the sea and from salt mines. Spain also produces silk and products made from silk. It is a land rich in honey, sugar, wax, oil, and saffron. This section on the exploitation of the land, agriculture, livestock, minerals, and other natural resources for human benefit is more lengthy and detailed than the similar section in the *laus Hispaniae* in the *PFG*. It is found immediately after the historical positioning of Spain as true inheritor of the richness of the Visigothic past. The Spaniards’ abilities to utilize and profit from the natural attributes of the land are keys to their success. And, their wise use of these resources is linked to the rich Visigothic heritage of territorial sovereignty as well as God’s largesse towards the Spanish people.

After praising the natural abundance and richness of the land, the text stresses the admirable qualities of the Spanish people and the country’s political might. Spaniards are astute, daring, fierce fighters,<sup>528</sup> not easily worried, loyal to their lord, studious, elegant in speech—in short, “complida de todo bien” (311) (accomplished in all good things). It is noteworthy that in this litany of the Spanish character, loyalty to one’s lord figures prominently. Alfonso was keenly interested in strengthening central authority in the person of the king and he is careful to include the trait of loyalty as an essential element contributing to Spain’s greatness as a country. The idea of political power comes on the heels of a detailed description of Spain’s natural bounty and is linked to it: “non a tierra en el mundo que le semeie en abundança, nin se egaule ninguna a ella en fortalezas et pocas a en el mundo tan grandes como ella” (311) (there is no land on earth that is her equal in abundance, none is equal to her in fortifications and there are few in the

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<sup>527</sup> The Ebro, Duero, Tajo, Guadalquivir, and the Guadiana.

<sup>528</sup> As we have noted, this characteristic is only briefly alluded to in the *laus Hispaniae* in the *PFG*.

world as great as she). The *EE* then repeats the importance of loyalty as a principal characteristic of the Spanish people who are especially esteemed because of this trait: “mas que todas preciada por lealdad” (311) (more than others prized for their sense of loyalty).

The *laus Hispaniae* next returns to the theme of Spain’s natural resources. Besides the five great rivers previously named, the writers mention additional important waterways in the peninsula as, for example, the River Miño in Galicia. The text states that other important rivers flow through Galicia, Asturias, Portugal, Andalucía, Aragón, and Cataluña. Just as the rivers flow through these lands, uniting them and watering the fields without regard to political division so, too, the writers imply that Spain is one united kingdom. The fertility of its lands depends on all the rivers in the peninsula to nurture it as a whole. The *EE* specifically names the Mondego River in Portugal as a segue to its claim that the Portuguese had squandered their land “tan noble, tan rico, tan poderoso, tan onrrado” (312) (so noble, so rich, so powerful, so honored) by engaging in internal disputes: “tornaron sus espadas en si mismos unos contra otros, assi como si les minguassen enemigos” (312) (they turned their swords on themselves, one against the other, as if they did not lack for other enemies). The idea that internal strife is foolish when all are faced with a common enemy (in this case, the Moors) is another manifestation of a call for Spanish unity.

In the *laus Hispaniae* of the *EE* Alfonso positions himself as head of a great kingdom, united under his centralized hegemony. The Spaniards, although defeated when the Moors invaded the Visigothic kingdom, are nonetheless united in this defeat and, by implication, in their efforts to re-establish Christian control over the Peninsula: “todas las cibdades de Espanna fueron presas de los moros et crebantadas et destroydas de mano de sus enemigos” (312) (all the cities of Spain were captured by the Moors and broken and destroyed by the hand of the enemy). These final words of the *laus Hispaniae* in the *EE* portray Spain grieving over her loss but determined to recover all her territories. Individual or regional identity takes second place to the idea of Spain as a unified kingdom, blessed in natural resources, and the rightful inheritor of all lands once under Visigothic control. Reminding the reader of the richness of the natural attributes of Spain inspires loyalty, a key Spanish character trait as we have seen, and a desire to wrest control of this abundance from infidel hands.

The *laus Hispaniae* found in the *PFG* and the *EE* include many of the same features. Both praise the richness of Spain’s lands, her abundant agricultural, livestock, mineral, and manufacturing production, and the admirable qualities of her people. The two encomia, however, differ in certain ways because the *PFG* and *EE* have different aims. The *PFG* is designed to celebrate the first independent ruler of Castile and assert Castilian dominance over the other Iberian kingdoms. Alfonso X, in compiling the *EE*, wanted to present the entirety of Spanish history

rather than a chronicle of a particular king or kingdom. He stresses a need for Spanish unity and centralized authority and promotes a sense of national consciousness throughout the *EE*. The *PFG* is concerned with fostering a particularly Castilian identity and both works include a *laus Hispaniae* as part of their political agenda. The natural elements chosen as particularly laudatory form important parts of these praises of Spain which inspire pride and even a sense of superiority in a Spanish audience. While, in many ways, the *laus Hispaniae* in these two works follow earlier models found in classical literature and the chronicles, they also innovate and manipulate features to serve their respective aims.



## Conclusions

Descriptions of the natural world are omnipresent in works from medieval Spain. Rather than serving as mere decoration or background for human interaction, they had intrinsic value for their originally intended audience and for modern readers of these texts. While we cannot dismiss the symbolic or allegorical associations that natural elements in these works evoke, careful attention to the descriptions of nature also reveal the authors' appreciation of the ecology and the esthetics of the natural world.

The first section of this book, "Nature Untamed," examined various wilderness areas—forests, deserts, mountains, seas—as these figure in representative works of epic, hagiographic, and narrative poetry. Humankind's relationship to untamed nature can be antagonistic or amicable as we have seen. For example, in the *Afrenta de Corpes* section of the *Poema de Mio Cid* the forest of Corpes is the site where the Infantes de Carrión brutally attack the Cid's daughters. The Infantes believe that they can act with impunity in an isolated area beyond the control of law or honorable action. They seek out the isolated oak grove of Corpes and use it as a natural shield for their plan to dishonor their wives and exact their revenge on the Cid. The forest in this poem is a harbinger of danger and destruction. This lawless wilderness is contrasted with sites of political power (the royal Cortes, the Cid's court in Valencia, the manorial estates in Carrión) where societal controls are enforced. In the dark forest, wild beasts hold dominion and the best chance for survival is to escape to the nearest urban area. The journey back from the forest will also, ultimately, be a journey from dishonor to restoration of honor for both the Cid's daughters and their father.

In contrast to the wilderness as a site of lawlessness and dishonor, the desert and mountains serve as positive catalysts in three hagiographic texts from thirteenth-century Spain. In the *Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca*, the desert is the site of Mary's penance, and its harsh conditions are agents that transform her from flagrant sinner to admirable saint. The desert's power to destroy her physical beauty, the root of all her sinful behaviors, is central to the tale of the repentant prostitute. The desert in the *VSME*, like the forest in the *PMC*, is certainly a hostile environment but Mary's suffering there is in no way like that inflicted on Elvira and Sol. In the former, the physical hardships Mary endures in the desert

ultimately play a positive role in her redemption, whereas the torments inflicted on the Cid's daughters in the forest are acts of naked cruelty designed to destroy and dishonor the women. In the forest of Corpes, wild beasts are objects of fear and potential harm for Elvira and Sol, whereas, in the *VSME*, one of the fiercest of wild creatures, the lion, is tamed and cooperates in the saint's burial. The dangers of wilderness are mitigated in the *VSME* because Mary willingly enters the desert to participate in God's plan for her salvation and elevation to sainthood.

In the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, Dominic's sojourn in the desert is preparatory to his entrance into monastic life where he will serve as a model of piety. Dominic's time spent in the desert is a self-imposed step on his journey from devout servant of God to the status of saint. The desert provides the hostile environment where Dominic eschews any corporeal comfort and becomes a role model of devotion and self-denial for his fellow monks. In the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*, Millán spends most of his life in the mountain wilderness in an effort to escape all contact with other people and any situation that might lead him into sin. His life of solitude and self-denial is driven by a desire to live apart from the world and grow closer to God. As a child, Millán received a vision from God that inspired him to follow a strict ascetic regimen and live as a hermit. The wilderness in this poem is a refuge for Millán and his home in the mountains is his spiritual oasis. Any potential for danger that this saint may encounter in the wilderness is allayed and even dangerous creatures, such as snakes, flee from him.

The sea represents a powerful force of untamed nature in the *Libro de Alexandre*. It covers most of the surface of the known world and, in the *mappa mundi*, it is essential for representing the created order. The sea defines the land masses and humankind cannot grasp its vastness or presume to know all its secrets. In the three *mappae mundi* in the *LA*, the Spanish poet relies on several known cartographic traditions to depict features of the world's oceans in both physical and allegorical terms. When Alexander extends his ambitions to conquer all the lands of the earth to include an exploration of the depths of the seas, he is punished by God and the allegorical figure of Nature. Just as the extent of the seas can only be figuratively represented on a map, the secrets of the seas are likewise beyond the limits of human knowledge. In the *LA*, Alexander conquers the known world but is destroyed by his pride and audacity by wanting to know what lies beneath the oceans' surface.

In the *CSM*, the sea is also a treacherous element in descriptions of the natural world. The potential dangers of the sea and risks of undertaking sea voyages are important features in several of the miracle narratives. The Alfonsine poets describe in detail the might of the stormy seas and the destruction they wreak on ships and sailors alike. They depict the sea in very realistic and frightening terms and emphasize the Virgin's ability to calm the menacing oceans, thus teaching a fundamental lesson about Holy Mary's power.

The second part of this book analyzes literary works that feature examples of “Nature Tamed,” i.e., spaces where natural elements have been harnessed and brought under control for human benefit or pleasure. Tamed nature is usually considered more predicatable than wilderness but human efforts to bend nature to its will are not always successful. The literary portrayals of tamed nature, specifically gardens and fields, are examined in works of secular and religious content. An example of the former is the late fifteenth-century (and early sixteenth-century) classic, *Tragicomedia de Calisto and Melibea*, commonly known as *Celestina*. The urban garden is a central feature of the *Tragicomedia* and essential to its plot. Other secular works where fields figure prominently are the *Poema de Mio Cid* and the *Libro de Alexandre*. In the third *cantar* of the *PMC*, the field for judicial combat where the champions of the Cid meet the Infantes de Carrión is treated in much detail and is a primary measure by which the Cid’s honor and that of his family is restored. Fields for battle are depicted and carefully described in the *Libro de Alexandre* as key elements in the narrative of Alexander’s military crusades. Fields of various types—agricultural, gaming, and battle—are analyzed in two works with religious content, two collections of Marian miracles both from the thirteenth-century, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of Alfonso X and the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* by Gonzalo de Berceo.

The urban garden described in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* is the setting for key moments in the text, such as the couple’s sexual encounters and the death of Calisto. This garden forms part of the urban landscape as a private area set aside for rest and respite. When Melibea allows Calisto access to this space within her parents’ home, it is converted, for a time, into a kind of lovers’ paradise. But, in the *Tragicomedia*, the garden will, ironically, be transformed from a site of carnal delight to one of death and destruction for the lovers and for many around them. When Calisto clandestinely enters the garden and has sexual relations with Melibea he invades not only her virginal body but also, metaphorically, the sanctity of her parents’ home.<sup>529</sup> The garden as a place of safety, with all unwanted elements excluded, proves vulnerable. Inside its walls, nature is groomed to be pleasant and inviting but the garden walls imply boundaries and when the lovers ignore these boundaries, both physical and moral, tragedy is inevitable.

Fields are another example of tamed nature and imply boundaries and human control. Fields for agriculture, livestock, recreation, and battle are all portrayed in Alfonso X’s collection of Marian tales—the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. For both the author(s) and audience of this text, fields were commonplace and the most frequent sites for interaction with the natural world. In the *CSM*, Holy Mary protects crops and saves livestock from harm. She appears in fields of play and

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<sup>529</sup> We may, of course, argue that Pleberio and Alicia fail miserably in their parental responsibilities to guard the virginity of their only daughter and heir prior to arranging her marriage.

battle and man-made borders present no obstacle for her intervention on behalf of her devotees. Fields appear in both text and miniatures in the CSM, providing both poetic and visual portrayals of the artists' experience of the natural world. This unique, multi-media format is especially useful to an understanding of how the compilers translated their interaction with the natural environment into artistic product.

In Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, fields are a central element in the plot of *Milagro XI*, "The Greedy Farmer." In this tale, the boundaries to fields are especially significant and the poet emphasizes the importance of legal limits to determine rightful ownership of property. When a farmer usurps fields owned by others for his own profit, he commits mortal sin from which he can only be redeemed by the Virgin's grace.

Fields set aside for judicial combat appear in the *Poema de Mio Cid* and the *Libro de Alexandre*. In the PMC, the champions of the Cid and the Infantes de Carrión face each other in a carefully-measured and legally-proscribed field as ordered by the king. The limits for the field of combat are precisely marked and, within this enclosed space, the combatants will determine who has justice on their side. The defeat of the Infantes de Carrión in this field is essential for the public recognition of both the Infantes' guilt and the restoration of the honor of the Cid and his family. A field for individualized conflict is also found in the *Libro de Alexandre* when Menelaus and Paris duel after Paris abducts Menelaus's wife, Helen. The Spanish poet adapts the description of the field and the combat from the classical tale to include elements that would have been familiar to his readers' experience of fields set aside for this purpose. The descriptions of battlefields in this work are similarly adapted for a thirteenth-century audience and emphasize that control of lands outside of city walls determines the outcome of an armed conflict.

A study of natural elements in medieval texts is not complete without an examination of depictions of nature as allegory or rhetorical exercise, i.e., "Nature Stylized." In the texts studied in the last section of this book, authors describe the natural environment largely in keeping with a well-known literary motif or rhetorical device. As examples, I analyze Berceo's adaptation of the *locus amoenus* motif for the purpose of religious allegory in the prologue of the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*. I also explore the use of a *locus amoenus* as a setting for sexual passion in the anonymous, *Razón de amor con los denuestos del agua y el vino*. Another rhetorical device—the encomium to Spain or *laus Hispaniae*—is discussed in terms of the function it plays in the *Poema de Fernán González* and Alfonso X's *Estoria de España*.

The *locus amoenus*, so often portrayed in classical literature and in medieval poetry of courtly love, is adopted and adapted by Gonzalo de Berceo to create an elaborate allegory about the majesty and mercies of the Virgin Mary. The perennially green meadow in which the pilgrim/poet rests on his journey, as

described in the prologue to the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, relies heavily on Biblical exegesis and Christian symbolism for its allegorical interpretations. Berceo portrays himself as a pilgrim on the road of life and identifies himself with all his readers/listeners. When he lies down to rest in the *prado verde* (green meadow) his audience immediately relates to the familiar scene of refreshment and repose. He invites his audience to linger in this meadow and listen to his stories about Mary's miracles. Berceo's didactic intent in the *MNS* is undeniable and he develops the allegory of this spiritual *locus amoenus* as a reminder of the powers of the Virgin and to celebrate the splendors of the natural world as part of God's creation.

A natural oasis of a very different sort is described in the anonymous poem, *Razón de amor con los denuestos del agua y el vino*. In this work, a pleasant forest glen becomes the site of both a sexual encounter and a debate between water and wine. The poet adapts many of the natural phenomena associated with the *locus amoenus*—trees, spring, flowers—to paint a scene of passion and sensual delight. He couples this scene to a debate between water and wine, a thinly-veiled argument which ultimately ends with the poet's approval of carnal pleasure. In describing the natural phenomena of the forest clearing, the poet skillfully combines realistic observation with symbolic references to enhance the sensual tone and subject matter of the poem. The forest of *Razón* is entirely benevolent with no hint of danger or malevolence for the lovers. The debate between water and wine, initiated when a bird upsets a glass of water that spills into a glass of wine, also occurs in the same forest clearing. The two glasses introduce non-natural elements into this setting and set in motion the allegorical debate that ensues. The poet certainly knew the literary motif of the *locus amoenus* but he consciously modified it for the purpose of celebrating corporal delights.

The *laus Hispaniae* as found in the *Poema de Fernán González* and the *Estoria de España* enumerates the rich natural resources and geographic advantages of Spain over all other lands. The encomia rely heavily on detailed descriptions of Spain's natural environment and specifically treat features such as mountains, valleys, rivers, and coastlines. They emphasize the fecundity of the land and its abundant agricultural and mineral production. While encomium of place is part of classical rhetorical practice, the *laus* found in the *PFG* and the *EE* are also designed to fit the narrative messages of these works. In the *PFG*, the *laus Hispanie* follows the episode of Charlemagne's unsuccessful incursion into Spain and in the *EE*, the *laus Hispaniae* appears after the invasion of the peninsula by the Moors in 711. By placing the praise of Spain after critical historical moments when the country suffers an invasion from outside forces, both works promote a sense of national consciousness and emphasize a need to unite for defense of the homeland. The *PFG* sings the praises of the first Count of Castile and makes a case for Castilian hegemony in the Peninsula, whereas in the *EE* Alfonso X uses the *laus Hispaniae*

as part of a larger political agenda to foster unity among all his kingdoms under strong centralized, royal authority.

In the texts analyzed, I emphasize a reading of the natural elements with an eye to how they are specifically described and the important roles they play in the works. Their authors describe the natural world by combining their own observations and experiences of nature with literary training and audience expectations in works as diverse as epic poetry, hagiography, narrative poetry, novel, and history. These texts, ranging from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century, give evidence of how medieval Spanish authors translated the natural world around them into literary artifact. For these authors, the natural world could be classified and their works usually focus on one category of the natural environment such as the wilderness beyond human control (Nature Untamed), spaces where humans exercise dominion over nature (Nature Tamed), or as a subject in rhetorical exercise (Nature Stylized).

Depictions of untamed nature can be further categorized and include descriptions of forests, mountains, desert and the sea—all places where human will does not hold sway and which may prove dangerous. These environments may be associated with illegal activities or secrecy but they can also be havens or retreats from those escaping the controlled environment of populated areas. Even deserts, usually considered devoid of natural amenities, become sites for penance and spiritual perfection, especially in hagiographical texts.

Gardens and fields, on the other hand, represent tamed nature. These are spaces where humans have claimed natural areas as their own, set up boundaries, and determined the use of natural elements within those boundaries. They can be sites for lovemaking, recreation, or conflict but their space is clearly delineated from wilderness and appropriated for specific human purposes. Finally, descriptions of the natural world that incorporate literary devices such as in the *locus amoenus* and the *laus Hispaniae* can also provide clues to authors' sensibilities about the role of natural environments in their works. The *locus amoenus* can break out of the tradition of courtly love to inform a religious allegory or separate itself entirely from *fin amors* to celebrate carnal passion. The *laus Hispaniae* can move beyond rhetorical exercise and be used to foster feelings of shared identity or even a sense of protonationalism.

In my readings of medieval Spanish texts, I have tried to show how all descriptions of the natural world are informed by both the authors' perceptions of their environments and established literary models. Following the example set by Rudd and other ecocritics, I have examined how these two planes of existence—personal experience with nature and literary expectations for its

description—interact to form part of the literary landscape in these works.<sup>530</sup> Human interaction with nature is at the core of this analysis. The literary portrayal of nature requires the intermediary agency of the author and each of these works presents a distinct manifestation of its author's experience of the natural world. Natural elements also held symbolic meanings for medieval readers/listeners that we may not readily perceive and authors frequently incorporated these connotative associations into their descriptions of nature. But if we read the descriptions of the natural world in these texts solely in terms of metaphor or allegory, we miss nuances of depiction that reveal the unique ways in which each author perceived the natural world and how he chose to incorporate that perception into his artistic product. Even if authors borrowed from a storehouse of literary motifs involving nature, each rendering of an element found in nature should be read closely and analyzed, not as mere backdrop or exclusively for its symbolic potential, but as a tangible artifact that gives clues to the author's understanding of the natural environment.

Finally, reading the natural elements in these texts with the principles of ecocriticism in mind does not mean that these works should be considered environmentalist literature in the contemporary sense of this term. The authors are not decrying the state of the environment, *per se*, but used the natural world as one means to illuminate the human condition. Natural features are both reality and allegory—agents which directly affect people's survival or their destruction and, at the same time, manifestations of God's created universe. The natural world was perceived in terms of identifiable areas such as forest, mountain, desert, meadow, garden, or field, and all these spaces held the potential for positive or negative experience. The dryness of the desert could be seen as harsh and inhospitable, or as an agent for spiritual redemption. The forest can prove dangerous but it can be a spiritual refuge. Fields can yield crops and feed livestock but can also be places for death and political upheaval when demarcated for battle. The garden may serve as a place of retreat and pleasure or be the site for death and destruction. Nature is always present and vital in these works. However, most critics have concentrated their study on the human drama or thematic content without proper attention to the careful delineation of natural settings these authors labored to create. Details about the natural world provide clues as to how medieval authors perceived and interpreted their interaction with the natural environment as both tangible reality and literary construct.

By concentrating on Spanish authors, this book seeks to contribute to the ever-expanding corpus of ecocritical studies on European and other literatures.

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<sup>530</sup> Rudd's study focuses on medieval texts as "sites where modern 'green' concern with how humans relate to, construct and inhabit the world coincide with how these things are articulated by medieval literary texts" (*Greenery*, 4) (see note 2).

Especially important is its emphasis on medieval and early modern texts since the majority of existing ecocritical analyses have dealt with Romantic, post-romantic, and contemporary literatures. In this sense it dialogues with the recent volume, also published by De Gruyter, on *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age* (2012) in its series, "Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture." It will also complement other important ecocritical studies on medieval literature, especially Gillian Rudd's *Geenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature* (2007) whose organizational scheme helped me to structure my own analysis.

Scholars of medieval and early modern English literature have been especially active in applications of the tenets of ecocriticism to early literature and I am indebted to such important studies as Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (2009), Jeffrey S. Theis, *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England: A Sylvan Pastoral Nation* (2009), and Todd A. Borlik's *Ecocriticism and Early Modern Literature: Green Patures* (2011). It is my intention that this study of early Spanish literature contributes to the growing field of ecocriticism as a critical tool for studying other medieval literatures. Reading with an eye to the natural world as depicted in canonical works of medieval Spanish literature has both altered and enhanced my personal reading of these texts and I hope it encourages other scholars to examine medieval works from new and exciting critical perspectives.

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## Illustrations

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Fig. 1 Cantiga 33

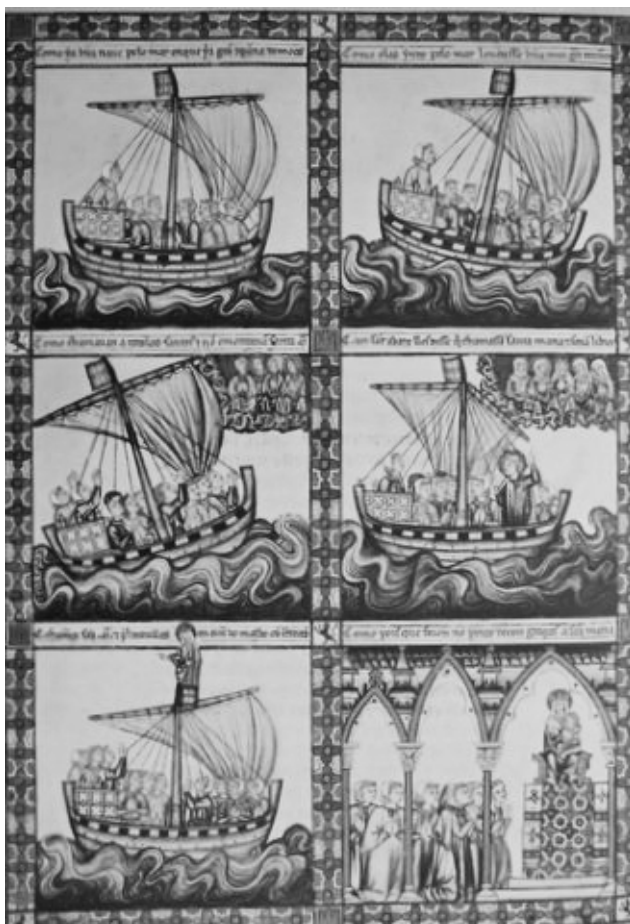


Fig. 2 Cantiga 36



Fig. 3 Cantiga 86



Fig. 4 Cantiga 172

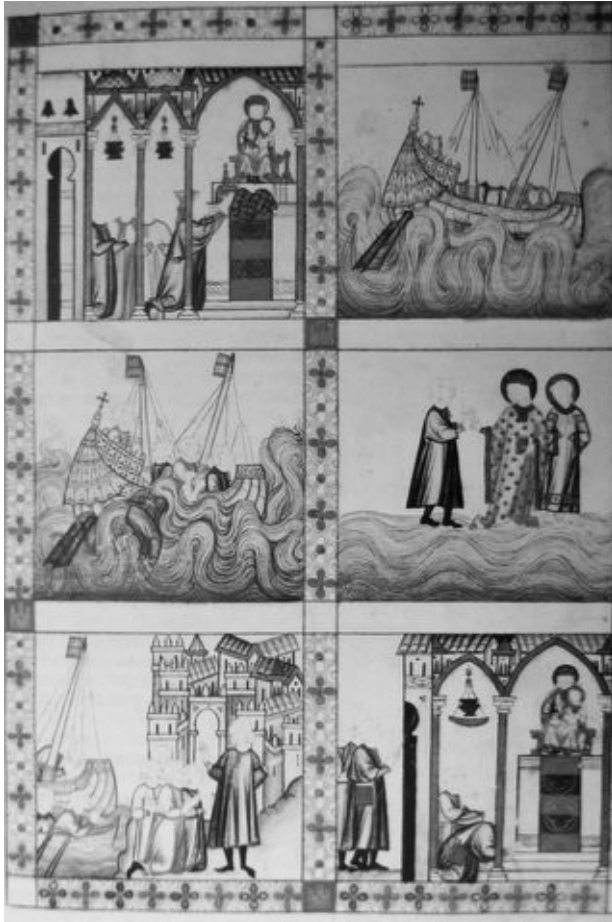


Fig. 5 Cantiga 267 (Florence ms. 71r)

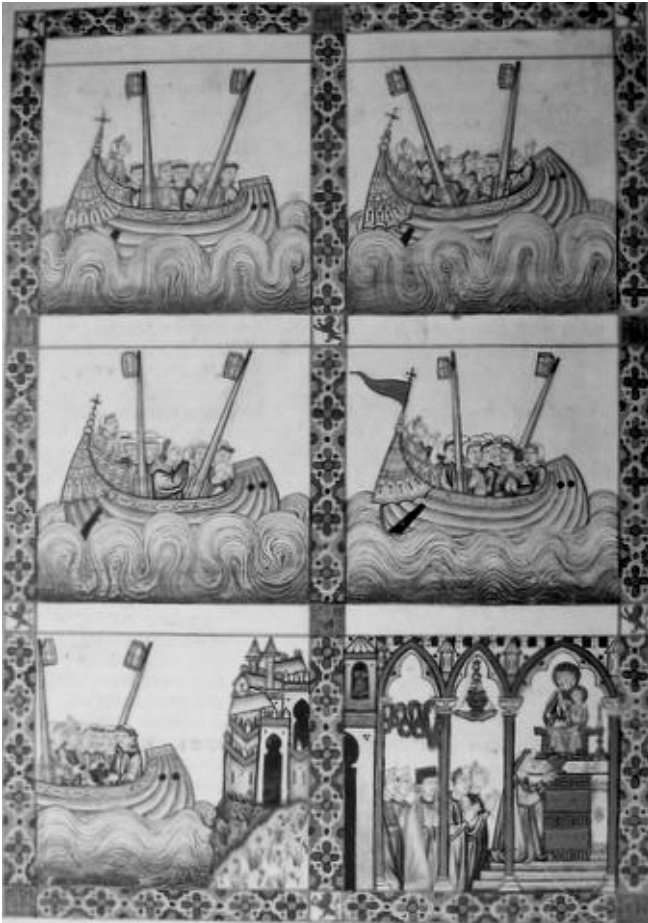


Fig. 6 Cantiga 313 (Florence ms. 18r)

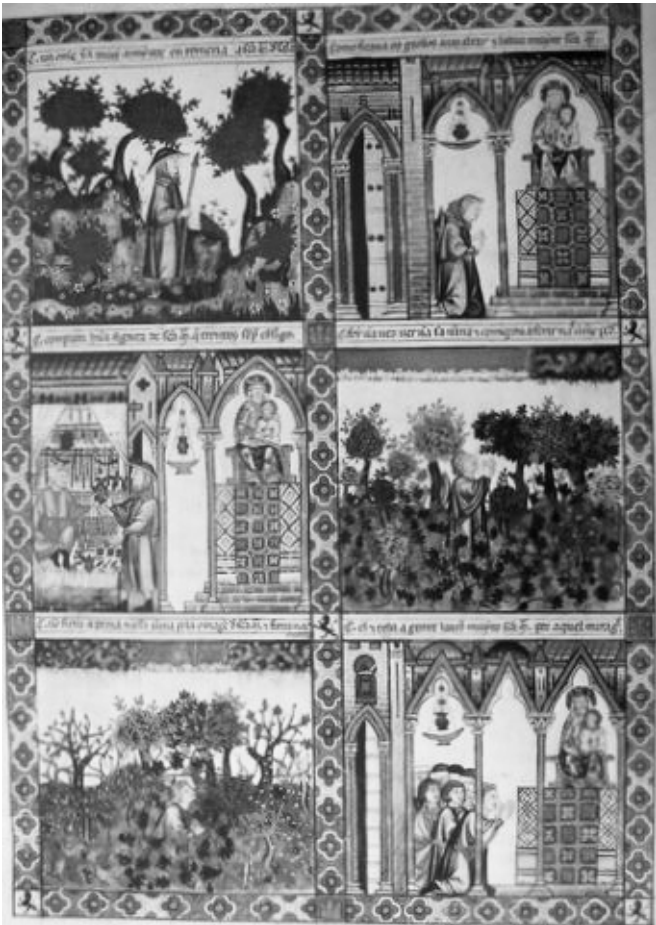


Fig. 7 Cantiga 161



Fig. 8 Cantiga 132 (miniature 2)



Fig. 9 Cantiga 178 (miniature 3)

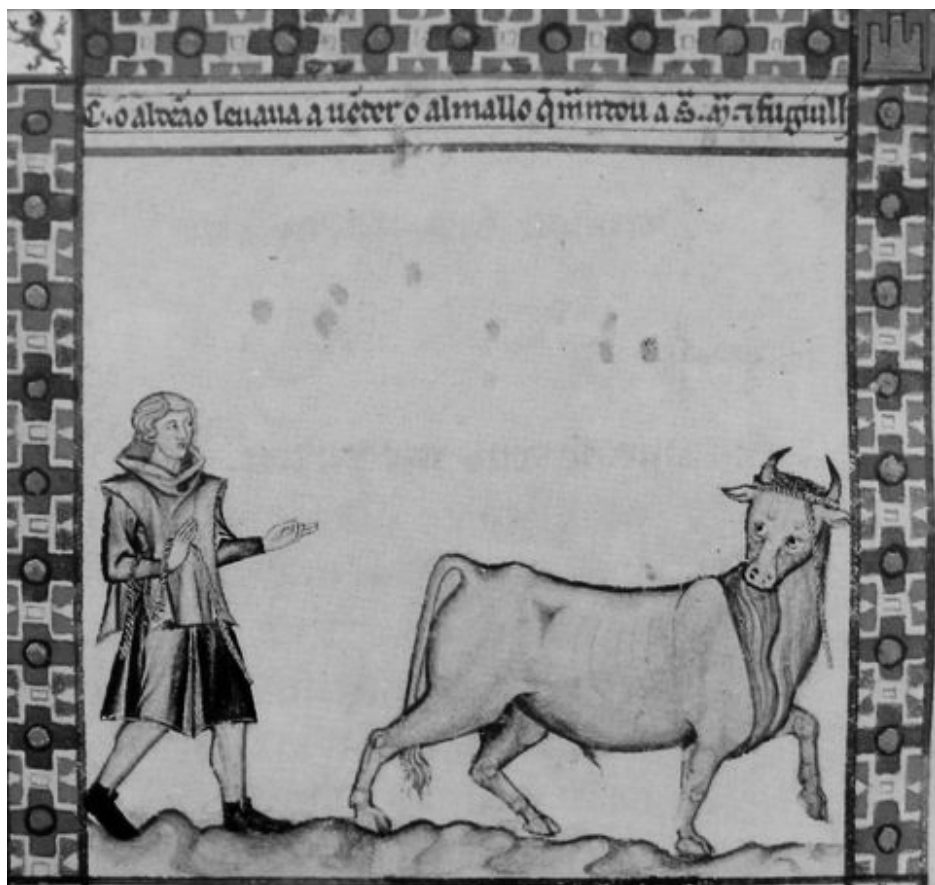


Fig. 10 Cantiga 31 (miniature 2)



Fig. 11 Cantiga 289 (Florence ms. 14r – miniatures 1 & 2)



Fig. 12 Cantiga 133 (miniature 1)

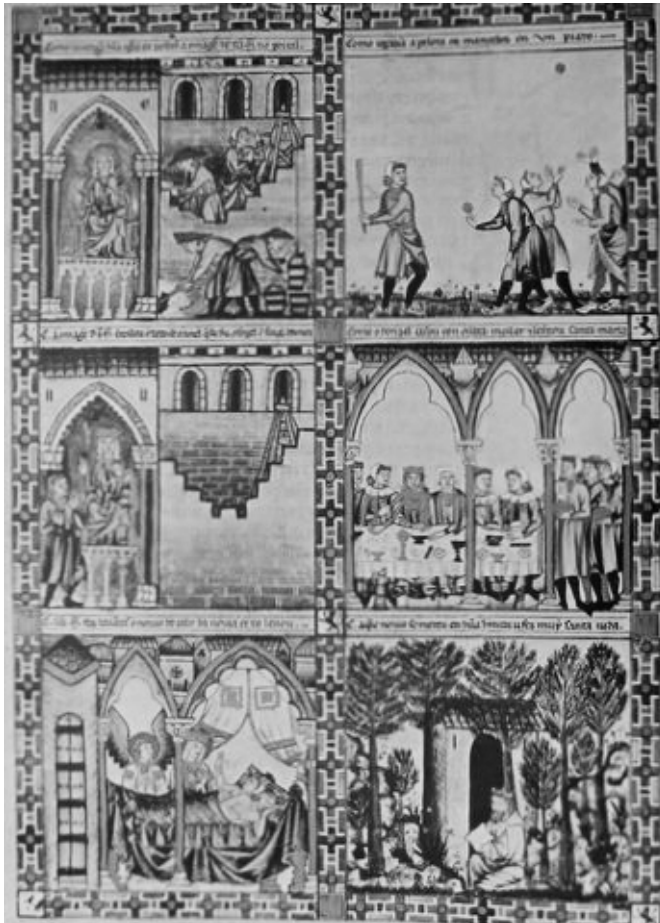


Fig. 13 Cantiga 42



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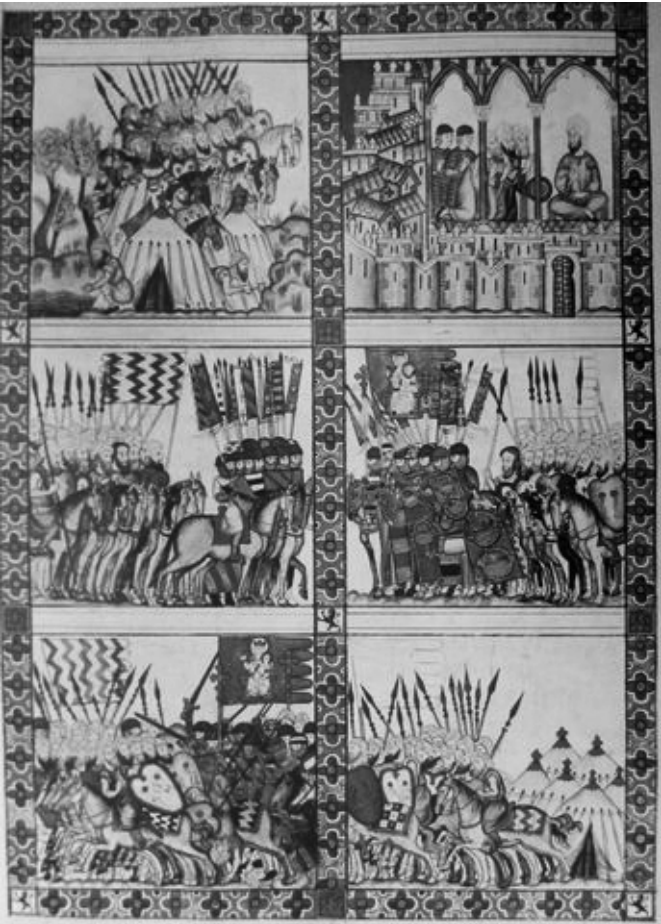


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